



Mouth Opening Exercises

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Who should consider mouth opening exercises?

Some people develop difficulty opening their mouth completely. The limitations may not be directly related to pain. If you have limited mouth opening without acute pain, gentle, mouth-opening stretching exercises can be helpful in promoting jaw muscle relaxation and restoring normal mouth opening.

How do I perform mouth opening exercises?

1. Passively stretch your mouth open to your maximum painless position by placing your fingers against your lower teeth and gently pushing your lower jaw down in order to open your mouth.
2. You can also use a “scissors action” by placing your thumb against your upper teeth and a finger against your lower teeth to open your mouth.
3. Hold the maximum opening for 5-10 seconds.
4. Repeat these steps 2 more times.
5. Do these repetitions 2 to 3 times a day.

Note: If either of these methods produce pain, that means you are applying too much force. Producing pain will likely cause a muscle response which may produce more pain and restrict your opening even more

What should I do if I am having jaw pain?

When pain is present, cooling the muscle may be helpful. You can cool the area with either an icepack or a vapo-coolant spray. Cooling the muscle will often allow greater stretching without pain.

- Place an icepack (or bag of frozen peas) against your painful jaw muscles for 1-2 minutes. There may be some initial sensation of discomfort but then the

tissue will begin to feel numb. Do not leave the icepack on for more than five minutes. While the pain is reduced, perform the stretching exercises described above.

- If you have a can of vapo-coolant spray, use it to spray the painful jaw muscles with the vapo-coolant for 3-5 seconds. Be sure to protect your eyes, ears, and mouth from the spray. Once you have completed the spray, perform the stretching exercises described above.
- After you have completed the stretch, warm jaw muscles by placing palms of your hands (or a heat pack or not moist towel) over the areas that have been chilled for 15 seconds.

Remember: This must be pain-free stretching!

Please contact the Orofacial Pain Clinic at (734)-936-3940 if you have any questions or concerns.

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