



SADDLE ROCK INSTITUTE

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## What to Expect with TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint) Arthroscopy

TMJ arthroscopy is a minimally invasive procedure used to treat disorders of the temporomandibular joint. A small camera (about 2 mm wide) is inserted into the joint to view and treat internal structures. The joint is flushed with at least 300 cc of fluid (compared to its normal 1–2 cc capacity) to help reduce inflammation, mobilize the disc, and break up scar tissue. At the end of the procedure, hyaluronic acid gel is injected into the joint to improve lubrication and movement.

### Insurance and TMJ Coverage Verification:

- It is your responsibility to confirm that your medical plan includes benefits for TMJ (temporomandibular joint) treatment. Even if your insurance company provides prior authorization or states that no authorization is required, this **does not guarantee payment or coverage**. All claims are processed according to your plan's terms, which may include eligibility requirements, exclusions, limitations, and state mandates.

### Typical Healing Time, Time off Work/School and Exercise:

- It is suggested to take 2-5 days off from work or school. Most people who have surgery on Tuesday will be able to return to work or school on Thursday or Friday.
- Avoid strenuous activity that will elevate your blood pressure for one-week post-surgery. It is ok to walk and do other light activities.

### Incisions:

- A small external incision (usually 5mm) is made in front of the ear and closed with dissolvable sutures.
- **Pressure bandage** will be applied and can be removed **24** hours after surgery.
- Keep sutures/stitches clean by washing with warm soapy water. Then pat dry and apply Bacitracin ointment. Always keep incisions moist with ointment. Do not submerge incision sites in water. Switch to Aquaphor ointment or Vaseline at one week post op and continue use until fully healed.

**Medications Following Your Procedure:** \*Note\* These medications may change based on individual needs and will be finalized with Dr. Dobbs on day of surgery.

- **Antibiotics:** Take as prescribed starting on the day of pick-up and finish all antibiotics. To reduce stomach upset, take with food and/or a probiotic if you are sensitive to antibiotics.
- **Ibuprofen 600mg:** Take one by mouth every 6 hours for pain and inflammation.
- **Norco (Hydrocodone with Acetaminophen/Tylenol):** Take one by mouth every 6 hours for pain. Alternate Ibuprofen 600mg with Norco every 3 hours for pain. **Take with food** to prevent nausea and vomiting.
- **Medrol Dose Pack:** Take as indicated on Rx packaging.
- **Methocarbamol:** Muscle relaxers, if prescribed previously, you may take as needed but avoid dosing at same time as Norco or other opioid pain medications.

### Swelling:

- You will have significant swelling on the first day, which will greatly improve within 24 hours. A lot of swelling is due to the high volume of fluid used to flush the joint space. There is a possibility that you will have numbness in the area, and it will improve as the swelling continues to decrease.
- **Ice:** You will be sent home from the hospital with a pressure bandage and ice packs. Use ice for 20 minutes every hour throughout the day for the first 2-3 days after surgery to help prevent swelling.
- **Heat:** Switch to warm compresses the evening of day 3 after surgery. Warm compresses will help ease tension/tightness in the jaw muscles and improve blood flow to reduce swelling.

**Diet:**

- **SOFT DIET for 7 days.** Rest your jaw by eating a soft diet for the first week post-op. Examples include eggs, well cooked pasta, custards, thick soups, soft fish, pancakes, oatmeal or any other soft foods you can cut with a cheap plastic fork.

**Week 1 post-op:**

- **Advance to Pain Free Diet:** Advance your diet to a “pain free” diet. You are free to eat what you would like. If you begin to feel pain or discomfort, back off, try softer foods and continue to work your way back to a normal diet. Muscle fatigue is normal when advancing your diet.
- **Muscle Spasms and Tightness:**
  - Warm compresses can be used to help reduce muscle tightness and spasms. Microwaveable warming rice packs work best and can be used multiple times throughout the day.
  - Chew, talk, and use your muscles normally to help reduce spasm and tightening of the muscles. If prescribed, you may also use muscle relaxers to help with tightness.
  - We will teach you appropriate jaw stretches and techniques at 1-week post-op.

**Week 5-6 post-op:**

- **Physical Therapy:** A vital component of post-operative care that helps improve muscle coordination and teaches appropriate stretching and strengthening techniques to reduce the risk of TMJ recurrence.
- **A grinding, sand like sound or feeling is normal following your procedure.** The goal of a TMJ arthroscopy is to return normal jaw function with reduced or eliminated pain. However, **popping, grinding, and clicking are typical with jaw use and may not be eliminated completely.** Due to the proximity of our jaw joint and your ear canal, it is normal for these sounds to be enhanced.

**Emergency After Hours: Contact your surgeon if you experience any of the following:**

- **Uncontrolled bleeding** that cannot be managed with applied pressure.
- **Severe pain** that is not relieved by prescribed or recommended pain medications.
- **Persistent nausea or vomiting** that cannot be managed. Some nausea post-surgery is normal due to the anesthetic medications used. Take all medications with food to help minimize nausea.
- **Worsening swelling 4 or more days after surgery.** Swelling is expected to peak in the first 2-3 days following surgery but should gradually improve.
- **Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.**
- **IF YOU ARE HAVING SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING, GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY.**

**If you have questions about your procedure or recovery, please contact us during normal clinic hours:**

**Monday–Thursday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM and Friday: 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM**

**For EMERGENCIES (as described above) after hours or on weekends, call our office at 720-826-8900 and follow the instructions in the voicemail message. If we're unable to answer right away, please leave a clear message, and we will return your call as soon as possible.**