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Temporomandibular disorders (TMD) describe a collection of painful, dysfunctional jaw conditions experienced by 5-21% of the population aged between 20-40 years old and particularly affects women. These disorders affect the Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) which connects the lower jaw to the skull and acts like a hinge to enable an extensive range of movements. TMDs have a variety of causes, originating from the surrounding jaw muscles, the joint itself or may be a combined muscle and joint issue. The most common symptoms are headaches accompanied with sore jaw muscles due to their repeated overuse in the habit of grinding or clenching the teeth subconsciously during stressful episodes in life. After successful diagnosis, most cases can be resolved in collaboration with a general dentist who may advise a hard occlusal splint to be worn as a night guard to protect your teeth against wear and disengage the jaw muscles responsible for grinding. Occlusal splints are generally advised to be worn for 6-12 months to actively counter TMD habits, and reviewed every six-months for adjustments as required during a check-up and clean with your dentist. Aside from the nightguard, alternative management strategies may be used concurrently: Awareness during the day time and minimising triggers: avoid chewy and crunchy foods, use heat packs on the affected areas, minimise the range of jaw movement when yawning or talking Consult other health professionals: Visiting a physiotherapist with a special interest in TMD for jaw exercises See a medical GP for medications to address any underlying conditions or mental health concerns Find a trusted person, counsellor or therapist to voice your worries and stress Ask your dentist about Botox injections to relax the jaw muscles Explore mindfulness and find ways to destress, such as taking a 10 minute meditation break, listening to music, taking a walk in the sun... find little moments in your day for a mental health break Improvement in TMD symptoms may take months to years to gradually resolve as you learn to incorporate these little habits into your life and continue to work closely with your team of health professionals. When symptoms have improved, the occlusal splint can be weaned off and temporarily re-worn during periods of recurrence until symptoms resolve again. A small percentage of TMD patients (<1%) may experience limited improvements after the above management strategies, whereupon a referral to an Oral Maxillofacial Surgeon specialist may be required. For these individuals, consistent efforts to adjust lifestyle behaviours, visiting a specialist for further treatment and finding healthy outlets for stress will be key to life-long management of the condition. Uncover more from Smile Solutions View Blogs Specialist Care Smile Solutions 18 Aug 2026 Endodontist vs Dentist for Root Canal: Why It Makes a Difference Read More Specialist Care Dr Kia Pajouhesh 18 Aug 2026 Complex Dental Cases: What Happens When Multiple Specialists Need to Collaborate Read More General Smile Solutions 10

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