

Orthopedic & Sports

Jaw & Facial Pain

What is Cranial Facial Pain?

Cranial facial pain is pain in the face, jaw, neck or head, with the most common type being Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMD). This may include a variety of headaches and migraines, ear pain or ringing in the ears, dizziness, jaw locking or clicking, or pain and tension in the neck/upper back along with a other symptoms.

What Causes Facial, Jaw and Head Pain?

Multiple factors may be involved in causing these problems, such as muscle coordination and strength of the tongue, posture, teeth alignment, nerve irritation, muscle tightness from overworking or poor posture, and behavior patterns while chewing or during stressful times.

What to Expect During Therapy:

Your physical therapist will evaluate your specific condition and develop a treatment program specific to your problem and goals. Treatments may include one or more of the following:

- Manual therapy or dry needling to reduce muscle guarding and tightness
- Joint mobilization or muscle energy techniques to influence the joints in the jaw or spine
- Specific therapeutic exercises to address muscle tightness and improve strength and motor control of the neck and jaw
- Meditation and breathing techniques also may be utilized to relax muscles and improve blood chemistry
- Neuro-muscular reeducation improves the coordination between muscle contractions and relaxations so that joints and muscles are used efficiently with less pain and increased function, specifically during eye movements, neck movements, breathing and opening and closing the mouth

Depending on your particular limitations, specific functional training will be geared toward your goals. Functional activities may include changing chewing and swallowing techniques to influence the neurological and motor pathways utilized and to decrease pain. Treatment may also include education on sleep quality/hygiene or foods that may irritate the jaw.