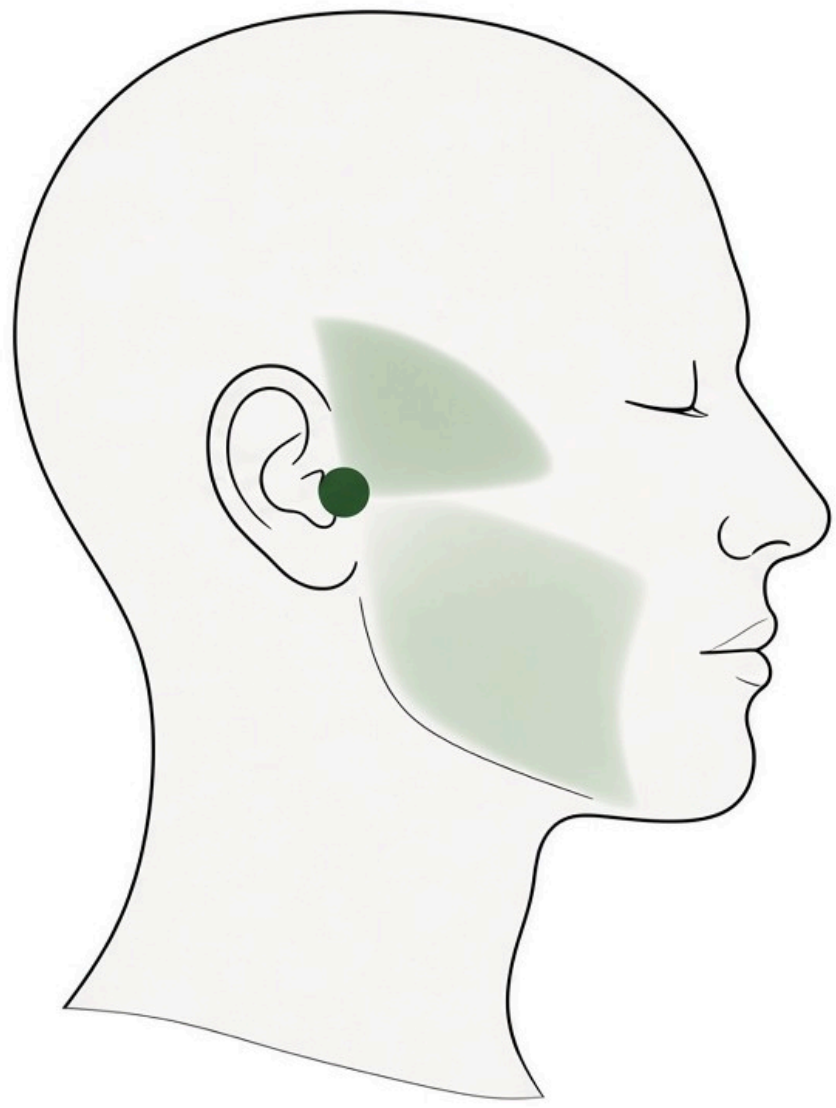
JawAbility

FREE GUIDE

THE TMJ STARTER GUIDE

Simple daily steps to calm your jaw, neck stiffness and headaches.

Clear, practical TMJ education with Joshua Cheng, TMJ physiotherapist.



- 3 self checks
- 4 daily habits
- 3 gentle exercises
- 1 daily checklist

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

What you will learn

01 Understand your jaw 3

02 Three quick self checks 4

03 Daily habits and the 4 Point Jaw Reset 6

04 Three gentle exercises 9

05 Flare ups, sleep and stress 10

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07 Your daily checklist 14

How to use this guide

- Go one section at a time. You do not need to do everything at once.
- Every section ends with clear steps to try today.
- Small steps every day work better than big efforts once a week.
- Everything here should feel easy and comfortable. Nothing should be painful.

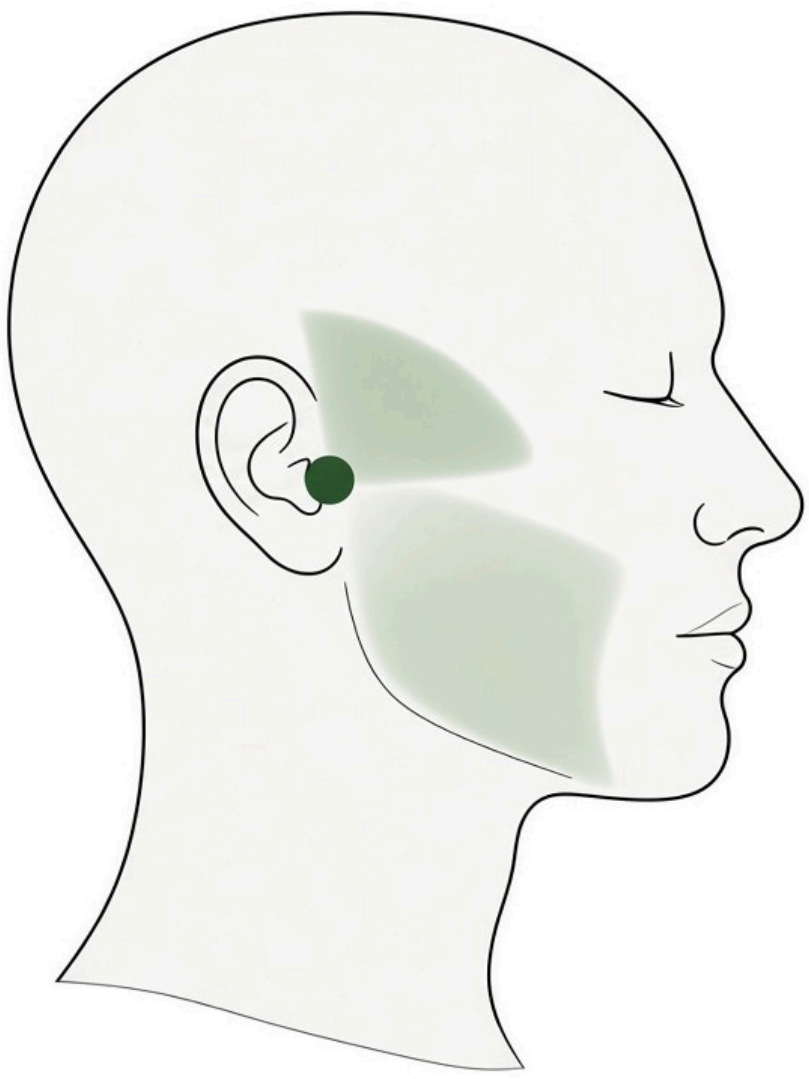
READ PAGE 13 FIRST IF:

Your jaw is stuck open or closed, you have sudden hearing loss, a pulsing sound in your ear, a fever or facial swelling.

01 UNDERSTAND YOUR JAW

Meet your jaw joint

TMJ stands for **temporomandibular joint**. That is simply your jaw joint. You have two, one just in front of each ear. They move every time you talk, eat, yawn or swallow.



Why it gets sore

The main reason for jaw pain and jaw issues is **clenching or bracing your jaw**. That means holding your teeth together or your jaw tight without meaning to.

It can happen during the day, at night while you sleep, or both. Stress, poor sleep and long hours at a desk can make it worse.

Over time your clenching muscles in the cheek and temple get tired and sore, and you can feel pain, clicking or stiffness. Your neck and shoulders often join in.

Most jaw problems settle with simple daily care. This guide shows you where to start.

TRY TODAY

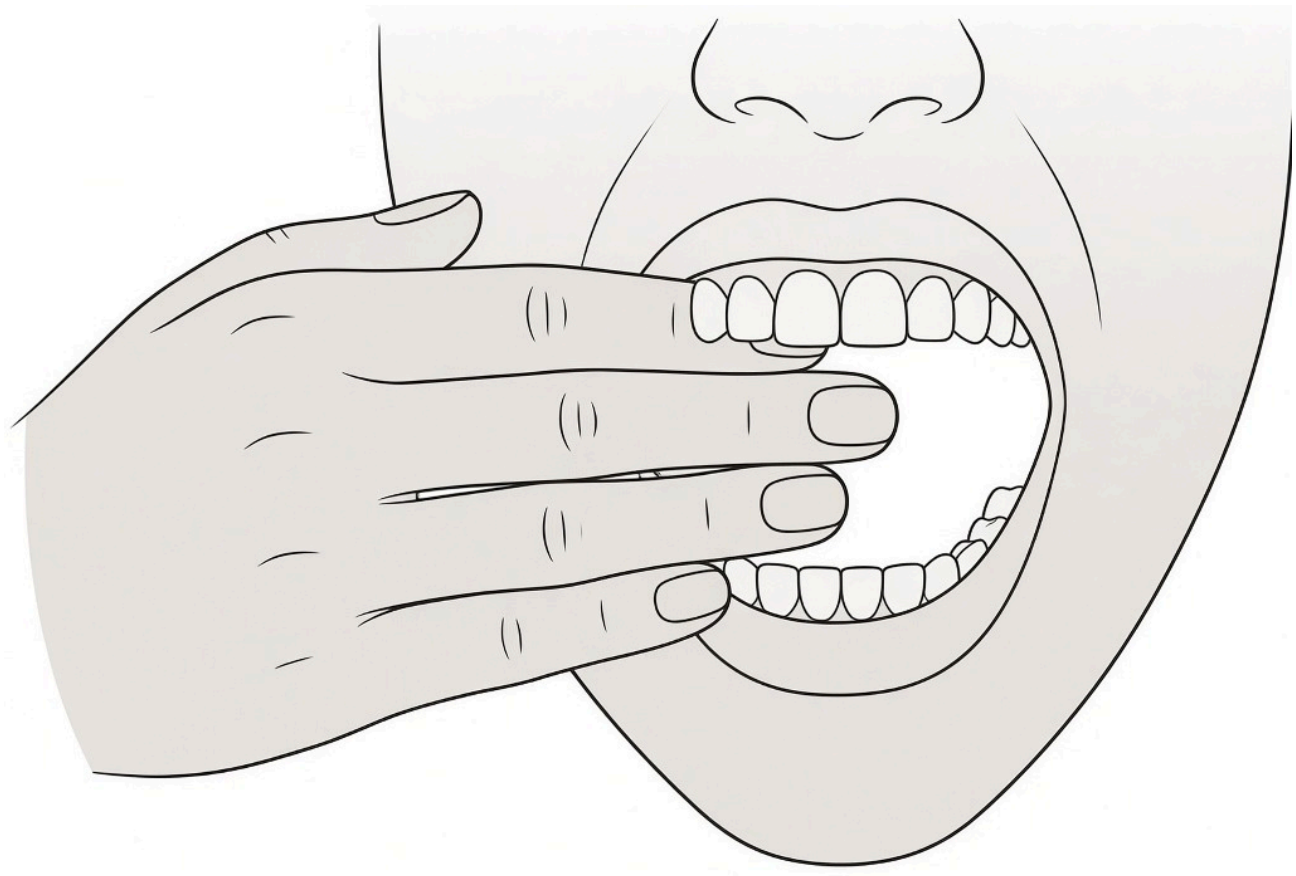
- [ ] Place your fingertips just in front of your ears.
- [ ] Slowly open and close your mouth.
- [ ] Feel both joints move. Notice if one side feels different.

02 THREE QUICK SELF CHECKS

SELF CHECK 1

How wide can you open?

This check shows how freely your jaw moves. It takes 10 seconds.



1. Wash your hands.
2. Open as wide as feels comfortable.
3. Stack your index, middle and ring fingers on top of each other.
4. Slide them between your top and bottom front teeth.

What your result means

About 3 fingers
A normal opening.

Less than 3
Your jaw may be tight. The habits and exercises in this guide can help.

Only 1 finger
Your jaw may be stuck. Get it checked soon, especially if it started in the last 2 weeks.

TRY TODAY

- [ ] Do the check once and write down your number.
- [ ] Repeat once a week to see your progress.

SELF CHECK 2

Clicks and clunks

A light click is a small, soft sound. Clicking is common.

A heavier clunk is a bigger sound, and the jaw may jump a little. This is less common.

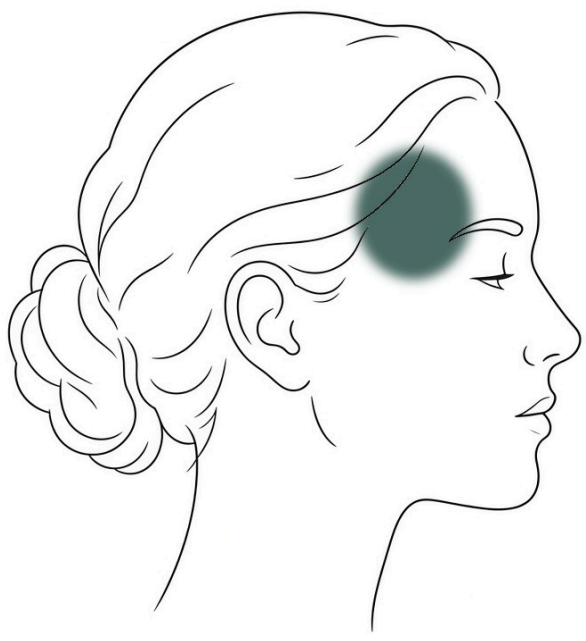
Neither is dangerous on its own. But when it comes with pain, it can cause problems and is worth getting checked.

GET IT CHECKED IF

- The click comes with pain.
- Your jaw catches or gets stuck.
- The click suddenly stops and you cannot open as wide.

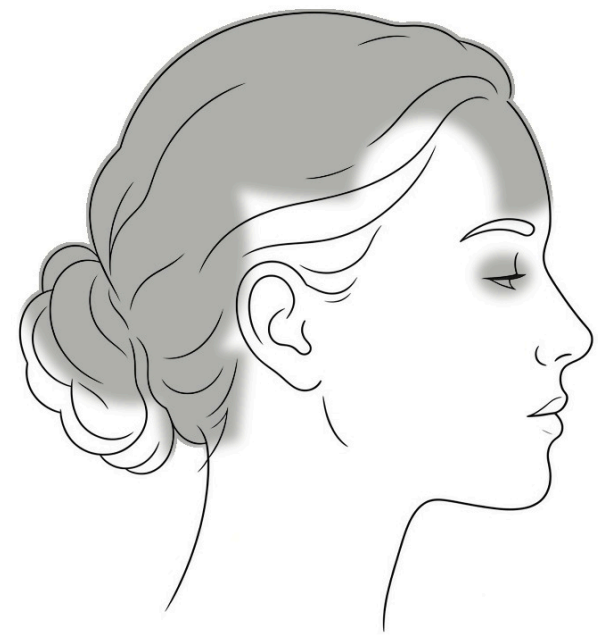
SELF CHECK 3

Where is your headache?



Jaw headache

Temples. A big clenching muscle sits here, so this headache is often linked to the jaw.



Neck headache

Forehead, back of the head, top of the head, behind the eyes. Often a headache that may come from your neck.

TRY TODAY: AT YOUR NEXT HEADACHE, NOTE

- [ ] Where it is.
- [ ] What time of day it started.
- [ ] What you were doing: screen work, driving, a stressful moment.

03 DAILY HABITS

DAILY HABIT 1

The 4 Point Jaw Reset

Your resting position. Your teeth only need to touch for a moment when you chew or swallow. If they touch all day, your jaw muscles never get a break.

1

Tongue up

Say a soft “N”. Your tongue lands on the roof of your mouth, just behind your top front teeth. Let it rest there.

2

Lips together

Close your lips gently. No pressing.

3

Teeth apart

Let your back teeth drift a little apart. Your jaw hangs loose.

4

Breathe through your nose

Slow, quiet breaths. Let your shoulders drop.

PRO TIP

Link the reset to things you already do many times a day, such as unlocking your phone or stopping at a red light.

TRY TODAY

- [ ] Set 3 reminders: a phone alarm, a small sticker on your screen, a note on your steering wheel.
- [ ] Each time you see one, do the 4 Point Jaw Reset and take 3 slow breaths.

DAILY HABIT 2

Catch tension and clenching

Many people clench without knowing. Each time you catch it, your jaw gets a break. Those breaks add up.

Driving **Screens and phone** **Concentrating**

Exercise and weights **Stress and rushing**

TRY TODAY

- [ ] Pick one of the times above as your cue.
- [ ] When it happens, ask: are my teeth touching? Are my shoulders up?
- [ ] If yes, do the 4 Point Jaw Reset.

DAILY HABIT 3

Chew and yawn kindly

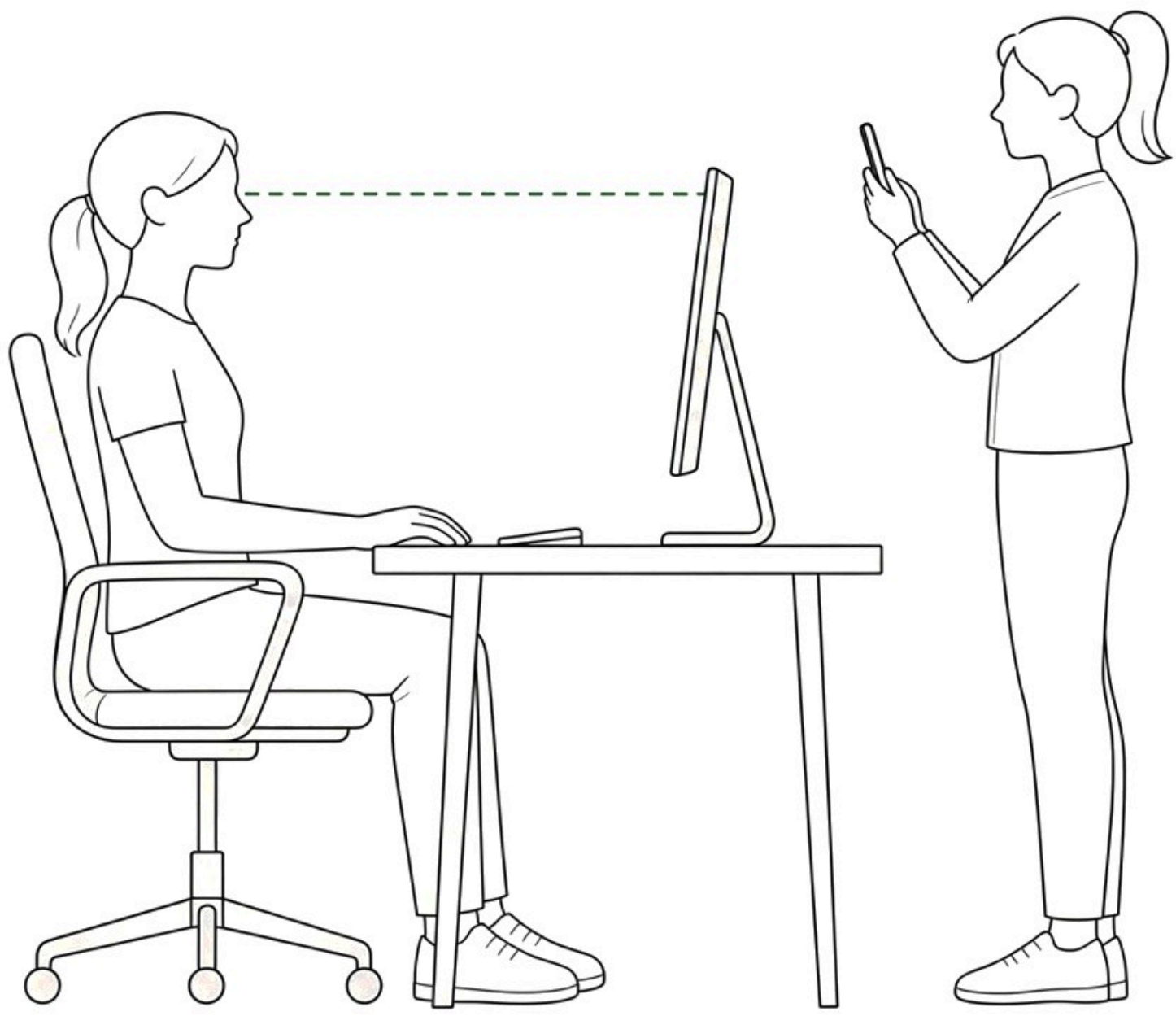
- Notice which side you chew on. Share it between both sides.
- Cut food small and take small bites.
- In a flare up choose soft foods: soups, eggs, yoghurt, pasta, fish, cooked veggies.
- For now avoid gum, tough meat, crusty bread, whole apples and ice.
- **Yawning:** place your fist or fingertips under your chin to gently limit how wide you open.



DAILY HABIT 4

Mind your head position

When your head drifts forward, your neck and jaw muscles work harder to hold it up. That can add to jaw pain and headaches.



Desk

Screen at eye level. Sit back in your chair. Feet supported.

Laptop

Raise it on a stand or books. Use a separate keyboard if you can.

Phone

Lift it towards eye level instead of looking down.

Couch and TV

Sit back with your head supported, not slumped or twisted.

TRY TODAY

- [ ] Set a repeating timer for every 30 minutes.
- [ ] When it goes off, stand up, bring your head back over your shoulders and do a chin tuck (page 9).

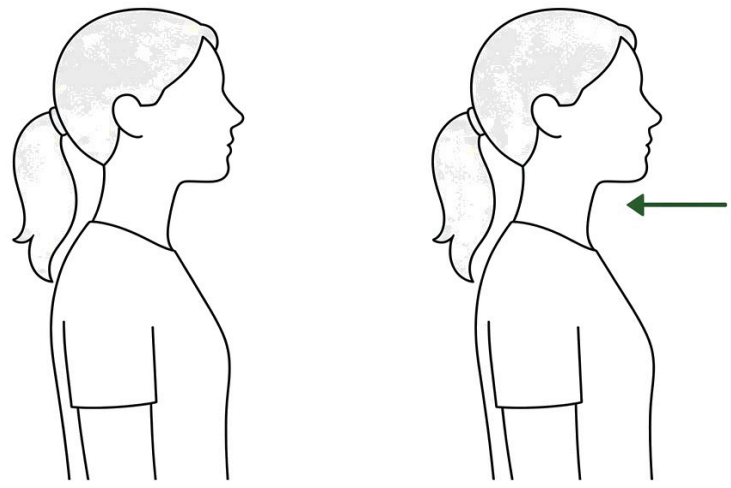
04 THREE GENTLE EXERCISES

THE RULES

- ✔ Slow and gentle
- ✔ Light stretch is fine. Pain is not.
- ✔ Breathe slowly the whole time
- ✔ **Stop if it hurts more**

1 Chin tucks

Brings your head back over your shoulders and eases strain at the back of your neck.



1. Sit or stand tall, looking ahead.
2. Slide your chin straight back, like a double chin. Do not tip your head down.
3. Hold, then relax.

Hold 3 seconds **10 reps** **2 times a day**

2 Neck stretch

Eases tightness down the side of your neck and top of your shoulders.



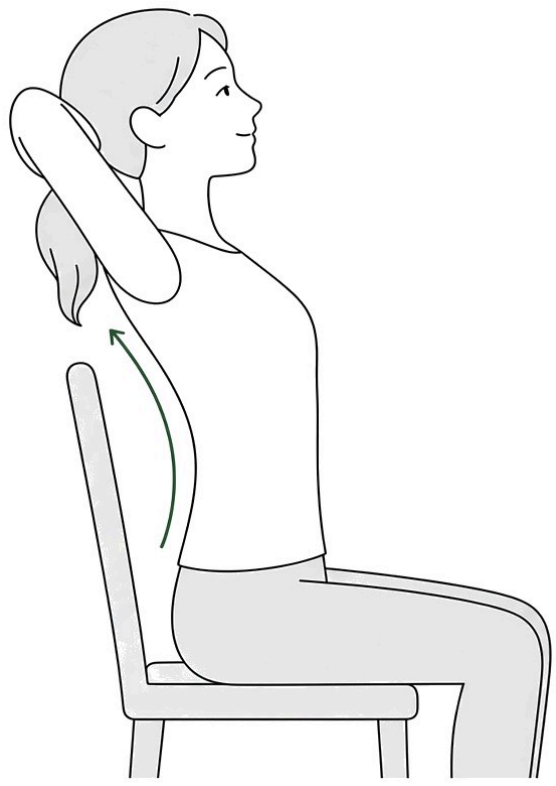
1. Sit tall, shoulders relaxed.
2. Tilt your right ear towards your right shoulder to a gentle stretch.
3. Hold, breathing slowly in and out.
4. Repeat on the left side.

Hold 30 seconds each side **Slow breathing throughout**

Stop if you feel dizzy, tingling or numbness.

3 Back bends

Desk and phone time round your upper back. Bending gently the other way helps your head and neck sit tall.



1. Sit tall on a chair with a backrest.
2. Hands lightly behind your head, elbows out.
3. Gently lean back over the backrest and lift your chest.
4. Hold, breathing slowly, then sit tall again.

Hold 5 to 10 seconds

3 times a day

Keep it gentle and stop if it hurts more.

05 FLARE UPS, SLEEP AND STRESS

Heat or ice?

Both can help. Try each and use what feels best for you.

Heat

Often best for tight, achy muscles. A warm (not hot) pack or warm cloth on your cheek, jaw or neck for 10 to 15 minutes.

Ice

Can help a fresh flare up that feels hot, throbbing or swollen. Ice pack wrapped in a thin cloth for up to 10 minutes.

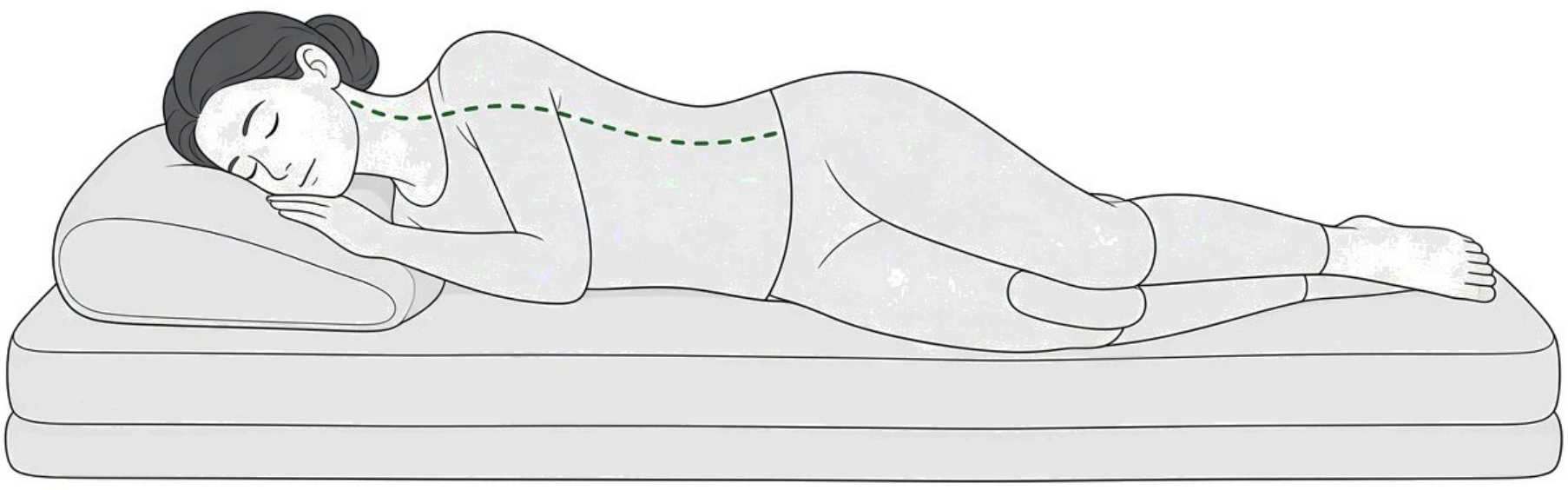
KEEP IT SAFE

Always put a cloth between your skin and the pack. Check your skin often and stop if it feels too hot, too cold or numb. For pain medicine, check with your GP or pharmacist.

SLEEP

Calm your jaw at night

Many people clench or grind in their sleep without knowing. A sore jaw or temple headache on waking can be a sign.



Sleep on your side

Side sleeping is the position to aim for. Use a supportive pillow that keeps your head and neck level with your spine, not tipped up or down. A pillow between your knees can add comfort.

Why not on your back?

When you sleep on your back, your tongue can fall back towards your throat and narrow your airway, especially if your tongue sits high or is large. This can cause choking or waking at night, and is linked with clenching at night.

Good to know

- Keep caffeine to the morning and go easy on alcohol in the evening. Both can affect sleep.
- Grinding? Ask your dentist whether a night guard is right for you.
- Snoring, choking or gasping at night? Talk to your GP or dentist.

TONIGHT: WIND DOWN ROUTINE

- [ ] Screens away 30 to 60 minutes before bed.
- [ ] Warm cloth on your jaw for 10 minutes, then 5 slow breaths.
- [ ] Settle on your side and do the 4 Point Jaw Reset.

STRESS

Breathe low and slow

Stress shows up as a tight jaw, raised shoulders and fast, shallow breathing. Slow belly breathing helps your body relax.



1. One hand on your belly.
2. Breathe in through your nose for 4. Belly rises.
3. Breathe out slowly for 6. Belly falls.
4. Let your jaw hang loose as you breathe out.

About 2 minutes **1 to 2 times a day** **Or whenever you feel tense**

Through the day, breathe through your nose with your lips together.

06 DENTAL VISITS AND WHEN TO GET CHECKED

Prepare for long dental appointments

Keeping your mouth open for a long time can flare a sore jaw. A little planning helps.

1. Tell your dentist about your jaw before you start.
2. Ask for short breaks to close and rest.
3. Ask whether a bite block (a small prop to rest your teeth on) can be used.
4. Book shorter visits, or split long work up, if possible.

> **AFTERWARDS**
>
> Rest your jaw with the 4 Point Jaw Reset. Use heat if your jaw muscles feel tight, and eat soft foods for a day or two.

IMPORTANT

When to see a professional soon

Get checked soon if you notice

- Your jaw gets **stuck closed or stuck open**.
- Pain that **will not settle** or keeps getting worse.
- **Sudden hearing loss.**
- A **pulsing sound** in your ear.
- **Fever** or **swelling** in your face.
- Symptoms that last **more than a few weeks**.

Who to see

A **TMJ physiotherapist** or a **dentist** is a great place to start. For sudden hearing loss, fever or facial swelling, see your **GP** or seek **urgent care**.

> **Getting checked early makes things simpler. You do not have to work it out alone.**

BRING THESE TO YOUR APPOINTMENT

- [ ] Your 3 finger number and how it has changed.
- [ ] Your headache notes: where, when, what you were doing.
- [ ] What makes it better and what makes it worse.
- [ ] Any clicking, catching or locking.

07 YOUR DAILY CHECKLIST

The Daily 10

Everything in one place. About 10 minutes a day. Print it or screenshot it.

MORNING

- [ ] Chin tucks, 3 second hold, 10 reps
- [ ] Neck stretch, 30 seconds each side
- [ ] Back bend, 5 to 10 seconds
- [ ] 4 Point Jaw Reset

DURING THE DAY

- [ ] Jaw Reset at your 3 reminders
- [ ] Catch clenching at your cue
- [ ] Get up every 30 minutes
- [ ] Back bend at lunch, 5 to 10 seconds
- [ ] Small bites, soft food in a flare up

EVENING

- [ ] Chin tucks, 3 second hold, 10 reps
- [ ] Back bend, 5 to 10 seconds
- [ ] 2 minute belly breath, screens off
- [ ] Sleep on your side, neck supported

ONCE A WEEK

- [ ] Redo the 3 finger check and write it down
- [ ] Check the warning signs on page 13

REMEMBER

Stop any exercise that makes your pain worse. Easy and comfortable is the goal.

JawAbility

Small steps, every day.

Be patient and kind to your jaw. Keep going with your daily routine, one day at a time.

FOLLOW FOR MORE SIMPLE TIPS

@jawability
on Instagram

QUESTIONS?

jawability@gmail.com

SCREENSHOT THIS: THE 4 POINT JAW RESET

- ✔ **Tongue up**
- ✔ **Teeth apart**
- ✔ **Lips together**
- ✔ **Breathe through your nose**

This guide is general education only. It is not medical advice or a diagnosis. Everyone is different. If you are unsure, or your symptoms are severe or getting worse, please see a qualified health professional.