

## Exercises to Improve the Function of the Jaw Joints and Reduce Pain

The purpose of these exercises is to prevent any clicking of the temporomandibular joint (jaw joints) and to strengthen the muscles which pull the jaw backwards. It will relax the muscles that pull the jaw forwards and from side to side as the jaw opens, and this should take some strain off the joints and reduce any pain that you have been suffering.

Initially, set aside two five minute periods every day at a time when you can be by yourself and relaxed. Perhaps you can shut yourself away in the bathroom or bedroom. Preferably, sit upright in a chair, and carry out these manoeuvres:

- A). Close your mouth on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your upper front teeth.
- B). Run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate, as far back as it will go, keeping your teeth just together.
- C). Force your tongue backwards to keep it in contact with the soft palate, and slowly open your mouth until you begin to feel your tongue just being pulled away from your soft palate. Do not try to open your mouth any further, just keep it in this position for five seconds and then let your mouth close. Relax for a few seconds, and then repeat this manoeuvre, in a firm but relaxed manner over the next five minutes.

As you open your mouth, you will probably feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw and under your chin. For the first few times, you should check in a mirror that you are opening your jaw straight (the lower teeth should move in a straight line downwards, with no side to side movements).

If you are doing the exercise correctly, there should be no clicks or noises from the joints. If there are, you are probably not doing the exercise correctly - read these notes again!!

For the first week, I suggest that you do the exercise no more than the recommended amount. Initially, it may make any pains a little worse, because some muscles are not used to the exercise, but this should soon wear off.