



## Should I balance my bite?

**Neuromuscular Dentistry** can help alleviate [symptoms](#) such as [headaches](#), [neck and shoulder pain](#), [jaw pain](#), [clicking or popping in the jaw](#), and [tinnitus \(ringing in the ears\)](#). The majority of North Americans suffer from one or more of these symptoms, and unfortunately in many cases these patients' symptoms are either misdiagnosed or dismissed as having no physiological cause. In a number of cases, these symptoms can actually be attributed to **TMJ (temporomandibular joint syndrome)**, also referred to as **TMD (temporomandibular joint disorder)** or **MPD (myofascial pain dysfunction)**. These terms are just different names for the same group of symptoms.

Here at New Era Dentistry we have Dr.'s that are **Neuromuscular Dentist's** and they may be able to help you if you are suffering from any of the above symptoms or a number of other symptoms.

To put it simply, **neuromuscular dentistry** places the jaw into its optimal position, relieving the symptoms associated with TMJ. While traditional dentistry evaluates primarily the teeth, bones, and gums, neuromuscular dentistry works with the hard tissues and the soft tissues, muscles and nerves. **Neuromuscular dentists** understand that your hard and soft tissues have a complex relationship and work to make that relationship a harmonious one. Neuromuscular dentists understand the necessity for including the power source (muscles) and the controls (nerves) which create the movement, pressures, and function of the mouth.

When the **jaw** is misaligned, both the hard and soft tissues are affected and many [physiological problems](#) can result, such as [headaches](#), [jaw pain](#), [neck and shoulder pain](#), [tinnitus](#), or [ringing in the ears](#), and [clicking or popping sounds in the jaw joint](#). In a number of cases, these symptoms are the result of TMJ (temporomandibular joint syndrome), also referred to as TMD (temporomandibular joint disorder) or MPD (myofascial pain dysfunction).

**TMJ / TMD** is a chronic degenerative disease that often takes years to develop. TMJ affects millions of people. People who suffer from TMJ have an imbalance in the jaw-to-skull relationship, which is caused by a bad bite (malocclusion). More info [www.leadingdentists.com](http://www.leadingdentists.com)

## **Treatment**

Neuromuscular Dentistry serves to correct the bite and realign the jaw.

First the dentist determines the optimal position of the jaw by measuring the relaxed position of the head and neck muscles, and then repositions the jaw to achieve those exact measurements.

Malocclusion is relatively easy to correct. Treatment options include adjusting the bite, orthotics, orthodontics, or restoring the teeth to their correct positions.

## **TMJ / TMD Diagnosi**

State of the Art technology is used to determine if your symptoms are caused by malocclusion and if so, what your optimal jaw position is. The dentist uses computerized jaw tracking instruments to record jaw movement, resting position, and path of closure. Electromyography is used to measure your jaw's muscle function in both its stressed and relaxed positions, and will also measure the jaw-to-skull relationship to see if there is a structural imbalance. Sonography is used to record jaw joint sounds to detect any abnormalities. Additionally, x-rays of the jaw may be taken to help evaluate the condition and positioning of the joint.

## **TMJ / TMD Treatment**

Once the Dr. has diagnosed you with **TMJ**, he or she can determine the best course of treatment for your specific needs. Typically treatment will follow three steps:

1. **Relieve muscle spasm and pain.**

The immediate concern for neuromuscular dentists is to provide relief of your symptoms. The best way to do this is by using a technology called ULF-TENS. ULF-TENS stands for Ultra Low Frequency Transcutaneous Electrical Neural Stimulation, but don't let this term intimidate you.

Basically, ULF-TENS is a way to relax muscles with a gentle massage of the muscles. The rhythmic pulsing relaxes the muscles by increasing blood flow and pumping out waste products. ULF-TENS also helps with pain relief by stimulating the body's production of endorphins, the body's natural anesthetic.

2. **Stabilize the bite.**

Often for this step a temporary device, known as an orthotic is worn over the teeth. The orthotic allows your neuromuscular dentist to make easy adjustments to the plastic without adjusting the teeth until the bite is stabilized. Once symptoms are relieved and the bite has been stabilized, your dentist will move on to the next step and permanently adjust your bite to the correct position.

3. **Long-term management.**

There are a variety of ways to correct your bite in a more permanent way. Four of the most common of these approaches are outlined below:

- **Coronoplasty/Equilibration**

Coronoplasty is smoothing and reshaping the enamel of the teeth to correct your bite. It is a simple procedure that does not require anesthesia and can be used when the bite is only slightly misaligned.

- **Removable Overlay Partial**

These are permanent orthotics that usually fit over the back teeth and are designed to maintain an aligned bite.

- **Reconstruction**

This approach involves making the teeth higher by using crowns. This permanently realigns the bite and provides structural support for the jaw.

- **Orthodontics (Braces)**

When the teeth are healthy they may be moved to the optimal position using braces.