

Do you have chronic pain? Headaches, perhaps, or pelvic pain? Vertigo?

Chiropractor Dr. John Dunn is attempting to spread the word about his home treatment method. He wants to educate his patients, and others, about their pain and the small ways in which they can treat the problem at home, at their office, or even in the car while waiting at a red light. It truly is simple, but effective.

First and foremost, Dr. Dunn wants people to understand that problems like vertigo or chronic pain are most likely related to problems with their jaw. His home treatment method addresses Temporomandibular joint dysfunction, or TMJ. It's important to understand how TMJ affects the jaw and how the jaw, in turn, affects the rest of the body.

According to Dr. Dunn, the mandible, or jawbone, is the most used joint in the body. The movement that occurs when the jaw is opened wide is called "translation," and it is made possible by the articular disc, which acts as a cushion between bone when the jaw slides open and closed. If the articular disc is displaced, however, tissue is pulled between bone, and this results in the clicking and popping of the jaw (and also pain). And, in later stages, disc displacement leads to the locking of the jaw.

If the jaw has been misaligned, symptoms might include soreness where the neck and shoulder meet (stiff neck), chronic headaches, vertigo, or an unstable pelvis. Dr. Dunn also describes several painful "trigger points," or knots, down one's back.

His solution for treating the pain is to address the misalignment of the jaw. To measure misalignment, follow these simple steps:

1. Place your index fingers on the tiny flaps on the front of your ears (the flaps you'd press if you were going to plug your ears closed).
2. Move your index fingers forward, sliding under the cheekbone but along the jawline.

3. Open your jaw wide.

If your jaw is misaligned, one side will be higher than the other. This exercise will enable you to identify which side is higher. The treatment for the pain, then, is to follow the steps above on the side where your jaw is higher until your index finger rests in that same location (beneath the cheekbone but along the jawline) and roll your fingers in circles for 10-15 seconds.

Do this often throughout the day to treat the misalignment and therefore begin to feel some relief from the pain.