



**Dentally Speaking**  
by  
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## Fibromyalgia: Are there dental treatments that can help you?

Fibromyalgia is a very complex disorder that has many signs and symptoms. Two common conditions often seen with fibromyalgia are headaches and sleep apnea. Researchers have yet to agree on whether fibromyalgia causes these problems or if they are just closely related. Regardless, to feel your best, you must also manage these other conditions and work with your doctor to treat them. In the past, the last person that anyone afflicted with fibromyalgia would turn to would be a dentist. Today many fibromyalgia patients are seeking adjunct treatment from their dentists for resolution of their headaches, facial pain and sleep apnea. Continual evidence shows that many patients are seeing their pain lessen or disappear when their headache and sleep apnea symptoms are addressed first.

### **Treating your Headaches and Jaw Pain**

Tension headaches and migraines seem to go hand in hand with patients suffering from fibromyalgia. It's likely that pain and tension in the jaw and upper neck

trigger headaches and migraines. This could actually be a direct bite or underlying TMJ disorder. Temporomandibular joint disorder (referred to as TMJ or TMD), affects many people's quality of living and can present itself through many symptoms such as clenching and grinding of the teeth. Clenching and grinding often results in muscle spasms in the jaw. This syndrome is the source of chronic pain for many fibromyalgia patients. In fact, 90% of all TMJ disorders are muscular in origin ("myalgia" in fibromyalgia is Greek for muscle pain).

The good news is that you can treat or even prevent migraines by addressing your misaligned bite with an approach called Neuromuscular Dentistry. This technique utilizes computer analysis and muscle relaxation to diagnose and treat your symptoms. It is very successful in improving or eliminating the chronic pain and discomfort that you have been living with for years. If you're experiencing pain in the face and jaw area, see your dentist for an evaluation.

### **Addressing your Sleep Troubles**

Sleep disorders such as snoring and sleep apnea are more common in people with fibromyalgia. As a fibromyalgia patient you have most

likely experienced sleepless nights yourself and know it is more difficult to cope with pain and fatigue after a night of bad sleep. With more and more research and technology in the realm of sleep medicine, we know how deadly this condition is and how important it is to treat it. Sleep apnea stops your breathing multiple times throughout the night. Although this triggers your brain to wake you up, most people only enter a semi-conscious state in order to take a breath, promptly falling back asleep right after. This means that you may have hundreds of episodes of sleep apnea in a night without realizing it. There are several sleep appliances that have been developed that stop snoring and sleep apnea. By keeping your airway open and unobstructed, these devices can help you breathe freely and sleep soundly at night, protecting you from the serious health risks of sleep apnea. Some dentists even have sleep monitoring screening devices that can identify how many snoring and apnea events you have throughout the night, allowing them to see if you are a candidate for certain appliances. Addressing your sleep issues, can lead to a reduction or complete resolution of fibromyalgia symptoms like headaches and jaw pain.

If you suspect you have a sleep disorder, such as snoring or sleep apnea, talk with your physician or dentist. These two sleep conditions are common in people with fibromyalgia and need to be treated.

Fibromyalgia is a difficult to understand condition and managing the symptoms can sometimes require treatment from different areas of medicine. Knowing where to begin and which treatment options are best for you can require a bit of research. Overwhelming evidence has shown that seeking treatment for coexisting conditions like headaches, jaw pain, TMJ pain and sleep disorders, could be the answer fibromyalgia patients are looking for to get relief. Information is power. Being examined and evaluated by a dentist with the proper training and technology in your area may be exactly what you need to improve your symptoms and quality of life.

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