

Is there a link between tinnitus and TMJ Disorders?

Over 30 million Americans suffer from tinnitus, or ringing in the ears. Unfortunately, many people are told that it is something they may just have to "live with" after other



Dentally Speaking by Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

treatment options are exhausted. However, just recently, a study was published that showed that TMJ disorders treatment has a very good effect on tinnitus, especially in patients with fluctuating ringing in the ears. Most people would never think that a person's teeth or jaws could have any effect on their ears, in fact, some physicians and dentists are also unaware of this fact. Many people can also be suffering from symptoms like headaches and vertigo that are really caused by an underlying or undiagnosed TMJ disorder. Therefore, this week I wanted to discuss what a TMJ disorder is, and how we are able to treat our patients ridding them of numerous symptoms that are affecting their lives.

Most people do not think to mention symptoms like headaches, vertigo, or ear ringing to their dentist. However, all of these symptoms and many more can be associated with a Temporomandibular (TMJ) disorder. TMJ refers to the actual temporomandibular joints but it is also a common name for a disorder that affects the facial muscles and joints that connect the lower jaw to the skull. When a person's bite is not in proper alignment and balance with the muscles and joints, a TMJ disorder can occur. This can happen early on in life or more often occur as we get older when our teeth and bite start to change or wear down. It is this imbalance that can result in the muscular pain and tension that can lead to

symptoms like tinnitus and these other symptoms:

Common TMJ Disorder symptoms

- Headaches
- Migraines
- Jaw Pain and tension
- Neck Pain
- Ear Congestion
- Vertigo
- Tinnitus (ear ringing)

The frequent concurrence of tinnitus and temporomandibular joint and masticatory muscle disorders (TMD) has led to the assumption that a possible relationship exists between these 2 conditions. The above mentioned study found that the prevalence of tinnitus was found to be 8 times higher in participants with TMD.

The results of this study and the prospective clinical trial showed a significant correlation between tinnitus and TMD. "The observed treatment outcome suggested that dental functional therapy may have a positive effect on TMD-related

tinnitus."

Over the past 15 years of treating TMJ disorders, we have continued to see patients that exhibited this life

plaguing symptom. Luckily, after we addressed their other TMJ symptoms with a dental appliance called an orthotic, they also got relief with their ear issues.

How can a person's bite or TMJ disorder affect their ears?

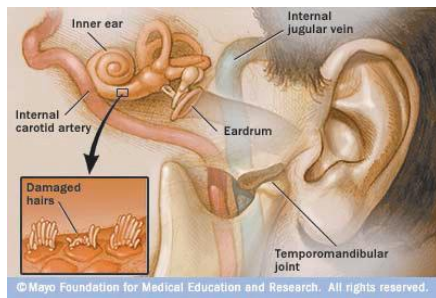
The main facial muscles surround and connect to the area right in front of the ears where the TMJs meet the skull. There are numerous blood vessels, nerves, and ligaments that exit and enter this area that supply blood supply, innervation and support the structures of the ears. When a person's bite has been adversely affected by grinding, excessive dental work, or even improper orthodontics, it can cause muscular tension in these areas. If this tension compresses these very sensitive nerves and blood vessels around the ears, symptoms like ear ringing, ear congestion (blockage), and vertigo (dizziness) can occur. By stabilizing and properly supporting a

person's bite in a muscularly relaxed and comfortable position, we decompress the area around the joints and ears and healthy physiology can occur and symptoms are relieved.

If you do suffer from tinnitus, ear congestion, or any of the other above symptoms, you

may actually have a TMJ disorder that has not been identified. With very sophisticated computer analysis as well as high-tech muscle relaxation techniques, we are able to diagnose a TMJ disorder and successfully treat it. Many people's quality of life is being

affected by these symptoms because they have not been able to find relief. If you, or someone you know, have not found a treatment to help alleviate these symptoms, a dentist properly trained in TMJ disorders may be the person you are looking for.



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