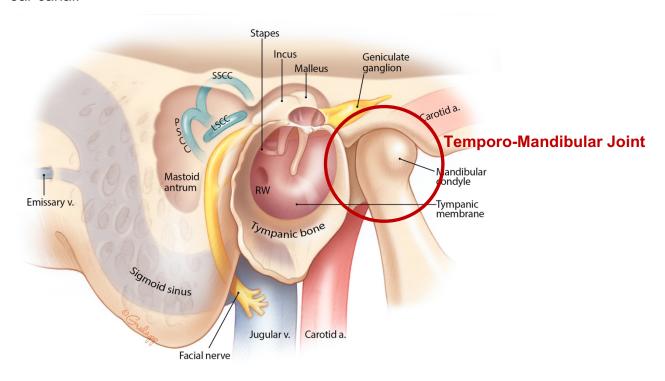


Temporomandibular Joint Disorder

The jaw joint, also called the temporo-mandibular joint, is located directly in front of the ear canal.



The temporo-mandibular joint shares common nerve endings with the ear canal. As a result, patients commonly report having ear pain when the jaw joint is swollen or inflamed from arthritis. In these cases, the ear is entirely normal on physical examination and the jaw joint is typically tender when the doctor presses on the joint. Arthritis of the jaw joint can arise from patients grinding or clenching their teeth. Patients sometimes are not aware of their grinding or clenching since it typically happens when they are asleep.

To help ease the discomfort, we recommend a soft diet (avoid chewing gum), apply a warm pack to the affected side, take aspirin or ibuprofen every 4 hours as directed by your doctor, avoid putting pressure on the jaw joint, and consult with your dentist to see if you would be a

candidate for a mouth guard at night. You can also consider a consultation with dentists or oral surgeons who specialize in temporo-mandibular disorder.