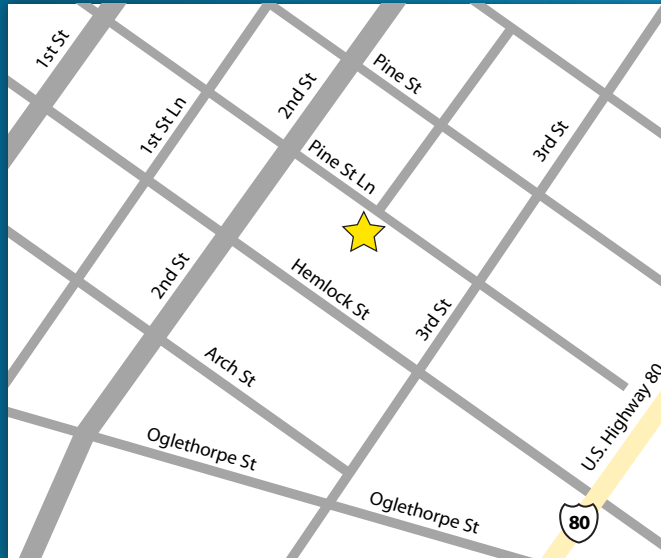




### About the ENT Center of Central Georgia

The ENT Center of Central Georgia brings together the very best physicians and support staff dedicated to providing you an exceptional patient experience. In our pursuit to provide excellence in medical treatment, we listen to our patients and focus on their symptoms. We develop individualized treatment plans based on your unique needs and treat you like we would a family member. Whether you have hearing problems, allergies, dizziness, sinus infections, snoring, or any other ear, nose, and throat related problem, we can help.

**For more information, contact one of the elite health care professionals at The ENT Center of Central Georgia today: 1-800-253-8953**

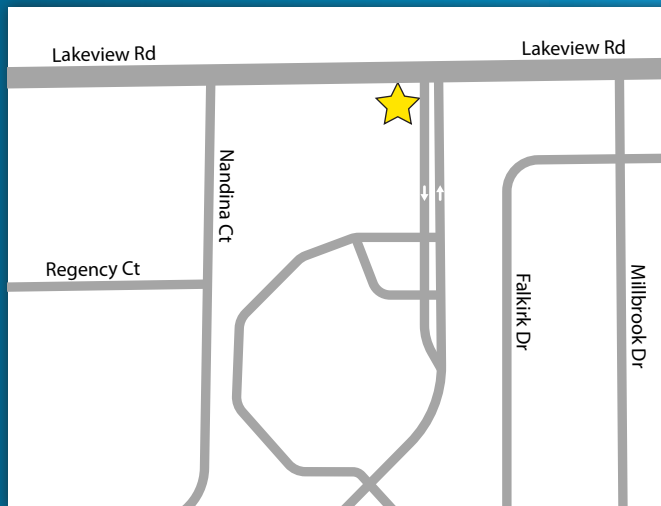


#### Macon Office

540 Hemlock Street  
Macon, GA 31201

Phone: (478) 743-8953

Fax: (478) 743-1963



#### Warner Robins Office

6084 Lakeview Road  
Warner Robins, GA 31088

Phone: (478) 333-2235

Fax: (478) 333-2238

# The ENT Center of Central Georgia

## Our Doctors Explain: TMJ



[www.theentcenter.com](http://www.theentcenter.com)



## Where is the TMJ?

Locate this joint by putting your finger on the triangular structure in front of your ear. Then, move your finger slightly forward and firmly press while you open your jaw completely and close it.

## How does the TMJ work?

When you bite down hard, you put force on the object between your teeth and on the TMJ. In terms of physics, the jaw is the lever, and the TMJ is the fulcrum. More force is applied to the joint surface than to whatever is between your teeth because the cartilage between the bones provides a smooth surface over which the joint can freely slide with minimal friction.

Therefore, the forces of chewing can be distributed over a wider surface in the joint space and minimize the risk of injury.

## What causes TMJ pain?

Pain associated with the TMJ results from the displacement of the cartilage disc. The popping or clicking occurs when the disc snaps into place when the jaw moves. In addition, the chewing muscles may spasm and cause pain.

What damages the TMJ?

- Major and minor trauma to the jaw
- Teeth grinding
- Excessive gum chewing
- Stress and other psychological factors
- Improper bite or malpositioned jaws
- Arthritis



The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) connects the temporal bone (the bone that forms the side of the skull) and the mandible (the lower jaw). It separates the bones so that the mandible may easily slide whenever you talk, swallow, chew, kiss, etc. Damage to the TMJ can cause considerable discomfort.

## What are the symptoms of a TMJ problem?

- Ear pain (patients may misinterpret the pain as an ear infection)
- Ringing in the ears
- Feeling of ear fullness or stuffiness
- Sore jaw muscles
- Temple/cheek/lower jaw/teeth pain
- Jaw popping/clicking/grinding
- Locking of the jaw
- Difficulty in opening the mouth fully
- Frequent head/neck aches

The pain may be sharp and searing, occurring each time you swallow, yawn, talk or chew, or dull and constant. Pain occurs over the joint, immediately in front of the ear, but can also radiate elsewhere. It often causes spasms in the adjacent muscles attached to the bones of the skull, face and jaws.

## How is TMJ pain treated?

Proper diagnosis by an otolaryngologist begins with a detailed history and physical, including careful assessment of the teeth occlusion and function of the jaw joints and muscles.

An early diagnosis will likely respond to the following simple self-remedies:

- Rest the muscles and joints by eating soft foods.
- Do not chew gum.
- Avoid clenching or tensing.
- Relax muscles with moist heat (30 minutes at least twice daily).
- Eat a soft diet for seven days.
- Maintain balanced chewing.
- Use a tooth guard at night.
- Take two Aleve twice daily for two weeks OR  
Take 600mg ibuprofen every six hours for one week.

In cases of joint injury, apply ice packs soon after the injury to reduce swelling. Relaxation techniques and stress reduction, patient education, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants or other medications may also offer relief.

Treatments for advanced cases may include the fabrication of an occlusal splint to prevent wear and tear on the joint, improving the alignment of the upper and lower teeth, and surgery. After diagnosis, your otolaryngologist may suggest further consultation with your dentist and oral surgeon.