

ask the expert

Written by **Kate Pigneri**, Community Sponsor
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Jaw-Dropping Details about

TMJ DISORDER

Educating Houstonians to
Alleviate TMJ Pain



Disorders of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) affect millions of people worldwide. TMJ discomfort can range from mild to severe, often increasing over time. Painful symptoms can develop across the upper body and can often appear completely unrelated to trouble in the jaw area. At Houston



Dentists at Post Oak, our TMJ dentists diagnose and treat TMJ disorders permanently. Dr. Nicholas Pigneri, native Houstonian, practicing dentist of over 10 years, and owner of Houston Dentists at Post Oak uses his neuromuscular dentistry background to permanently treat pain and discomfort caused by TMJ.

We've put together some information to help have a better understanding of what TMJ disorders are, and how they can best be treated.

Q: What is TMJ disorder (TMD)?

A: TMJ disorders develop when problems occur with the joints connecting the jaw to the skull. These joints, known as temporomandibular joints (TMJ), along with the associated muscles and soft tissue, are responsible for opening and closing the mouth. TMJ joints rotate and slide, controlling the position of the lower jaw. These joints are cushioned by cartilage discs. Damage to the TMJ discs, problems with TMJ alignment, injury to the surrounding muscles and more can all lead to the development of temporomandibular joint disorders (TMD).

Q: What causes TMJ disorder?

A: TMJ alignment is fragile. Patients may suffer a TMJ disorder due to any of the following possible causes:

- **Disease.** Diseases can lead to bone and cartilage loss in the jaw, causing the development of TMDs. The TMJ is at risk of damage caused by osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, as well as cancer and infections of the jaw and surrounding area.
- **Trauma.** Injuries to the jaw can lead to the development of TMJ disorders. Jaw alignment can be affected by heavy impacts to the face, neck, and head – even whiplash. Trauma can cause damage to the jawbone and the cartilage in the TMJ.
- **Bad Bite Position.** Misalignment of the teeth can cause the jaw to shift to one side more than the other, or cause the jaw to be pulled back. This can result in TMD in some individuals.

Q: When treating TMJ Disorder, how is your practice different?

A: Dr. Pigneri has received additional TMJ training after dental school at the prestigious LVI Global Institute. In 2018 alone, Dr. Pigneri completed 109 hours of advanced continuing education. Not all dental offices offer this type of in-depth TMJ treatment, which makes our practice stand out. As

recently as 2021, Dr. Pigneri was selected by his peers as a Houstonia Top Dentist and Texas Super Dentist. Houston Dentists at Post Oak is proud to offer the best in dentistry and TMJ treatment.

Q: What are common symptoms of TMJ disorder?

A: Some symptoms of TMJ disorder include:

- Jaw popping, clicking, locking, or grating
- Headaches
- Ear pain or difficulty hearing
- Facial fatigue
- Shoulder, face, jaw, and/or neck pain

TMJ disorders can strike patients of any age. Trends suggest women may be at a higher risk for TMJ disorders than men. TMJ disorders (TMD) have different effects on each patient; the signs and symptoms vary.

Q: How do you relieve TMJ disorder symptoms at Houston Dentists at Post Oak?

A: We start with a \$150 consultation, which includes muscle scans and digital photos. Dr. Pigneri and his assistant discuss their findings with you during the consultation. If you are a candidate

for TMJ treatment, we typically recommend a tooth-colored fixed orthotic, which is fitted on the lower teeth and adjusted over the course of 6-8 weeks to relieve your TMJ symptoms. After symptoms have been alleviated, we discuss permanent options for your particular case.

At **Houston Dentists at Post Oak**, Dr. Pigneri cares deeply about each patient's well-being. For additional information, or to schedule an appointment, visit our website at www.postoakdds.com or call us at **713-255-1029**.



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