

The minimum goal for opening the jaw is to be able to fit the knuckles of the index and middle finger between the teeth, as in figure at right. In addition to the following self-treatments described here it is important to have a good posture and to have good tongue position.

Since much of the tension related to this muscle is caused from clenching due to stress there is a meditation exercise included on the facing page. In addition, if your doctor has not already discussed recruitment of a dentist then you may want to do so. Some areas have access to TMJ and bite specialists. These are great people to have on your team!

General



Self-Massage



Use the pads of your fingers to feel around your cheeks above the angles of your jaw with a kneading, circular motion, as in figure. Any tension or ropey sensation that you feel you should massage away.

Acupressure

Sometimes you may find very sensitive, tender points in the cheek muscles. By applying a deep and steady pressure these points will disappear, as in figure. You don't have to massage yourself to be successful just press on the point to illicit the feathers edge of pain and follow that edge until it disappears.



Re-Training

Place the pads of your thumbs under your chin. You will be using them to gently resist opening of your mouth, as in figure. Open your mouth as far as you comfortably can. When you reach your limit try to open your mouth more into your thumb pads for 5 seconds. When you are done opening then your mouth will most likely open a little bit more. Remember our goal of at least 2 finger widths.



No one ever taught us in medical school how to do what I am about to share with you now, but they did teach us about the harmful effects of stress upon our physical bodies and our emotions. We live in a tense society and are expected to shoulder a lot of things and keep a stiff upper lip. Hence, it is no wonder that we carry so much tension in our shoulders, upper back, neck and jaw.

Meditation and achieving the relaxation response have been documented countless time to benefit everything from pain to asthma to cardiovascular disease.

There are a variety of techniques and levels at which to meditate. The one presented here is designed to help you focus on quieting your mind and to be an easy introduction to the art of meditation.

**Position:** Either sitting comfortably in a high back chair (figure A), sitting in the lotus position (figure B) or laying flat on the floor (figure C)...really any position that is comfortable for you to be in.

**The breath:** Breath deeply in and out through your nose with your tongue resting comfortably on the roof of your mouth. If you place a hand below your belly button and one on your chest they should be rising and falling together.

**The preparation:** Start at your fingertips and try to relax any tension that you feel in your muscles of your hand. Progress your focus up your arms...then into your neck...then into your head...then down your neck to your shoulders, chest and back...then to your stomach and low back...then to your buttocks and eventually to your thighs, legs and feet.

**Focus:** As an introduction in learning how to focus your mind you are going to count your breaths silently to yourself. On inhalation count "1" to yourself and upon exhalation count "2". Continue counting to yourself up to "10" and then start all over again and repeat the whole process 4-6 times. ***You will be amazed at how just counting your breath will quiet your mind!***

