

Physical therapist providing new jaw pain treatment

By Chalan Harper
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For those who have been ignoring that popping or clicking sound when they open their jaw, physical therapist Cameron Lyons can help.

That sound is the result of a shock-absorbing disc that sits between the two bones in the temporomandibular joint in the jaw moving in and out of place, Lyons said, and can indicate a more severe case of TMD.

TMD stands for Temporomandibular Disorders, or Dysfunction, and can be a result of head trauma or injury to the jaw, but can often develop without a direct cause.

Since 2007, Lyons — who practices at Precision Physical Therapy in Louisville — has been using a new treatment to treat muscle pain associated with TMD.

Historically, such pain in jaw joints has often been treated with correcting a patient's posture, with an emphasis on the cervical spine, or neck.

"That's certainly effective,

and it's certainly a part of what we continue to do," Lyons said. "(But) I think, historically, a lot of physical therapists have been hesitant to work with the joint itself ... that's changed over the last several years."

Because the jaw muscles and joints are connected to muscles and joints in the neck and shoulders, treatment of TMD often involves treatment of more than just the site of the pain, Lyons said.

The new treatment utilizes more intra-oral mobilization of the joint itself, during which Lyons will hold the jawbone itself and use that to mobilize and improve the movement in the joint.

Another key factor in the treatment is called a hyperboloid, which is essentially a rubber bite tube.

The bite tube is utilized to create a distraction in the joint, which allows for more space and normal positioning of the aforementioned shock absorption disc between the joints. The tube also helps protect the joint from further damage.

Though, Lyons cautioned,

not every case of TMD is related to that disc being out of place; it can also be a result of the two joints rubbing together. The tube can help mitigate that, during treatment, as well.

"It takes the two bony joints off each other, so there's no bone to bone contact."

Unlike some treatments of the past, the method Lyons uses allows the patient to have considerably more control over their own treatment, even when they are not at the physical therapist's office.

"(The treatment) is more well-rounded; it involves the patient more and allows for more of an active recovery," Lyons said. "We open and close our mouths about 2,000 times a day...it allows (patients) to treat themselves throughout the day, and maintain progress between treatments with me."

If both the physical therapist and the patient stick to their treatments, however, patients can experience less pain, less popping in the jaw and less tension in the muscles.

Lyons cautioned, however,

that the treatment is not a miracle cure and, like most physical therapy regimens, involves a lot of time and work. Other facets of the treatment focus on treating from the shoulders up.

"It's all one functional unit," he said.

For more information on TMD treatment, call Precision Physical Therapy at 303-926-1444.



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**Physical Therapist
Cameron Lyons, of
Louisville's Precision
Physical Therapy,
works with Kristine
Wert on her
temporomandibular
dysfunction, also
known as TMD.
Lyons uses the
rubber tube to help
alleviate stress and
pain in the jaw joints.**