Stress is a major cause for temporomandibular joint disorders

Practicing relaxation techniques can help relieve symptoms

New Delhi, 21 August 2017: As per recent studies carried out throughout India, there is a rise in the number of people suffering from TMD (temporomandibular joint) disorders. About 52% of the Indian population suffers from varying degrees of TMD and of these, 22% are affected both in the right and left TMJ. As per the IMA, a lot of these disorders can be attributed to increase in stress levels, especially among the young.

TMJ connects the lower jaw to the skull. Although there are many reasons for TMJ disorders, including improper alignment of the teeth or trauma, it can get aggravated by stress as well. This is the only moveable joint in the entire face.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “The TMJ is a ball-and-socket joint which can erode due to many reasons. Under stress, a person tends to clench their jaw or grind their teeth (bruxism). Due to this, the muscles become taut and the joint does not get any rest leading to inflammation, pain, and dysfunction. TMJ disorders can lead to a clicking sound or grating sensation when a person opens their mouth or chews. However, provided there is no pain or limitation of movement associated with this jaw clicking, treatment may not be necessary. Many symptoms of TMJ syndrome can respond well to home remedies or stress reduction and relaxation techniques.”

Some symptoms of TMJ disorders include pain the jaw, dull ache or radiating pain towards the cheek, ear or neck, a tired feeling to the face, toothaches, headaches, clicking or popping sounds while yawning or even limited movement of the jaw.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “There are many other conditions which cause symptoms similar to TMJ disorders. These include a toothache, sinus problems, arthritis, or gum disease. A dentist will conduct a careful patient history and clinical examination to find out the exact cause and ascertain whether the symptoms are due to any TMJ disorder. Treatments for TMJ disorders range from simple self-help advice and conservative treatments to injections and surgery.”
Some home treatments for these disorders include the following.

- Over-the-counter medications: NSAIDs such as naproxen or ibuprofen help relieve muscle pain and swelling.
- Heat or cold packs: Applying an ice pack to the side of the face and temple area for about 10 minutes can help.
- Eat soft foods: Yogurt, mashed potatoes, cottage cheese, soup, scrambled eggs, fish, cooked fruits and vegetables, beans, and grains are good choices.
- Avoid extreme jaw movements: It is good to keep yawning and chewing to a minimum. Avoid any activity that requires you to open your mouth wide.
- Posture: Practice good posture to reduce neck and facial pain.
- Learn relaxation techniques: As stress is a major cause for these disorders, it is better to consider some stress reduction therapy and techniques such as yoga and meditation.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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