

# The Perfect Bite

A wrong bite may not only be causing you migraines and backaches, it may also be affecting your career and your personal life, so says Dr. Marvin Dorotheo

PHOTOGRAPHY JAR CONCENCO



Those migraine attacks and back pains could be something else.

According to Dr. Marvin Dorotheo, an expert in TMJ management, sleep apnea and oral surgery, people experiencing constant headaches and dizziness, even sleeplessness, may be suffering from temporomandibular joints (TMJ) syndrome without them knowing it.

More often than not, people, including doctors, would dismiss headaches and facial pains as just mere maladies that can be cured with quick fixes like pain relievers and aspirin. Dr. Dorotheo suggests that such problems may have something to do with your TMJ, or your bite.

For the uninitiated, TMJ syndrome is a problem experienced by the muscle and joints that connect your lower jaw to your skull and hold it in place. The TMJ joints are located on each side of your head, just in front of your ears. When these muscles are

inflamed or strained, it may result to a TMJ disorder.

Those suffering from it may experience migraines, facial pain, ringing in the ears, muscle pain, insomnia, and even depression.

One of the most common contributors that trigger TMJ-related problems is the misalignment of the jaw or wrong bite, or in medical jargon, malocclusion.

The bite dictates the movement of the jaw. A wrong bite causes the jaw to shift automatically into a new position. The brain, being the "balancer" of the body, then finds a way to compensate for the imbalance caused by canted jaw. Dr. Dorotheo suggests that the effects may vary from patient to patient. If left untreated, it could lead to poor posture, facial asymmetry, uneven gait and other physical manifestations.

"The human brain keeps the body in equilibrium. If it senses an imbalance in any part of the body, it immediately

## Great to Know

While it may not be the solution, yoga can be a great help to patients who are being treated for their TMJ disorder. Yoga focuses on lengthening and strengthening your muscles, so any pain or discomfort caused by the misalignment of the jaw can possibly be averted

sends signals to different parts so that the person can adapt to certain abnormalities and changes in the body. Sad to say, a wrong bite is an imbalance," says Dr. Dorotheo.

Sleep problems would eventually follow. The brain would always put your body on alert because it perceives a canted jaw line as an obstruction.

"This will not let you get into deep sleep, because the brain is on alert. We all know the effects of lack of sleep — poor productivity at work, inattentiveness. Aside from being irritable, you also become more prone to diseases because your immune system goes down," he says.

Indeed, it's not just the bad bite that Dr. Dorotheo is concerned about. While most practitioners consider TMJ disorder as a purely structural/mechanical problem, Dr. Dorotheo believes that the misalignment of the teeth or bad bite can affect total body health.

"This could affect your performance in work and in life. You may not be maximizing your full potential because a lot of TMJ-related problems are bogging you down. So in the end, you're not as productive as you're supposed to be," he says.

"In TMJ management, you have to wear many hats all at the same time. You have to be a neurologist, an endocrinologist, a chiropractor. It entails a lot of medical fields. TMJ management extends beyond the structural/mechanical relation of the chewing muscles and joints. I would miss out on a lot if I were to focus on the joints only."

Treating TMJ is a long-term therapy. It's not something that can miraculously align the jaw and heal the joints in one go. While surgical realignment is the last resort, especially for severe cases, the most common way of treating TMJ syndrome is through the use of an



Don't let the interiors fool you. This operating room has modern equipment that one would see in other high-end clinics. This is where most of the oral surgeries and other treatments are held

appliance or splint. It's a plastic guard (much like a mouth guard) that is fitted either on the upper teeth or lower teeth or both. It relieves the wearer from further pain and reduces clenching and teeth grinding, thus allowing the jaw muscles to heal.

"The first few weeks of therapy would be uncomfortable, but the pain is manageable. Once you begin therapy, you'd notice the improvement in your sleeping patterns. Less migraines means increase in productivity. Because nothing is slowing you down anymore, you would get to do what you've always wanted to do," he says.

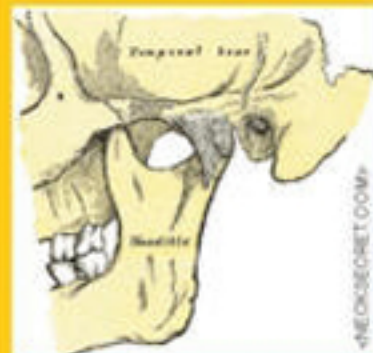
This holistic approach to TMJ management and treatment is something that Dr. Dorotheo is passionate about. A self-confessed perfectionist — the type that doesn't stop until he finds the best solution to a problem — Dr. Dorotheo even took a seminar from Dr. Robert

Walker, a foremost expert in the field of Chiropractic and Kaye MacArthur, whose expertise lies in Cosmetic and Restorative Dentistry, on the relatively new Heart Rate Variability, which measures and assesses the heart's ability to respond to impulses, stress and adrenaline. He's also trained by Dr. Colin E. Sullivan of University of Sydney for Sleep Medicine.

While Dr. Dorotheo has remained unassuming and reserved, despite his knowledge and vast experience in his field of interest, he doesn't shy away from telling his patients how passionate he is in his craft.

"When I was 25 years old, I was diagnosed with hypertension. My doctor told me to change my lifestyle and to lose weight. I did all those things but later I discovered I had sleep apnea. Nobody knew I had it and nobody was able to address it," says Dr. Dorotheo.

"So when I became a dentist, I wanted to know more



## HOW TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE TMJ DISORDER

Not all people know they have TMJ Disorder. So it's better to do a self-evaluation to find out if you're one of them. Here are the symptoms:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Migraines
- Facial pain
- Ringing in the ears
- Muscle pain
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Throat problems
- Eye problems
- Forgetfulness
- Limited and painful jaw movement
- Grinding and clenching of the teeth
- Chronic neck, shoulder and backache
- Hypersensitivity
- Clicking or popping sound when opening or closing the mouth

about Sleep Apnea and TMJ. So I read books and researched, until I came across this wealth of information on this new approach on TMJ management."

This constant drive for perfection has brought him not only success, but personal fulfillment as well. His humble little clinic in an old building in Cavite is testament that the dentist is not after the monetary success or fame.

"I am not after the money. I don't even aspire to become the 'dentist to the stars'. I find it really fulfilling when I see my patients happy. I'm committed to pursuing health care, by giving people a healthy and beautiful smile. It's my way of helping people get what they want in life," he says. **CI**

To know more about TMJ, call (046) 477-3082 (Cavite) or 659-1437 (Alabang). You can also visit [dorotheodental.com](http://dorotheodental.com)

Although he has seen success over the past years, which includes opening a better, bigger clinic in Alabang, Dr. Marvin has chosen to keep his humble clinic in Cavite open. After all, this is where it all started