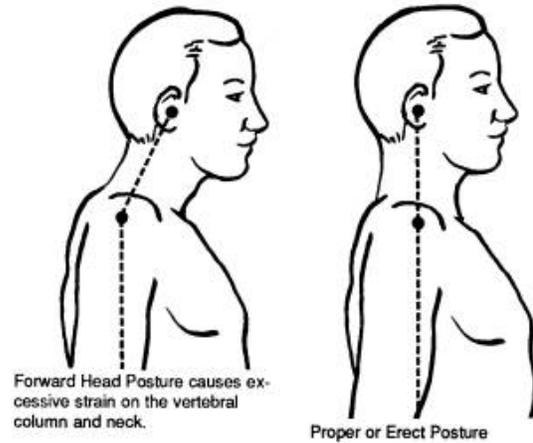


Passive TMJ Exercises

Forward Head Posture & Airway Dysfunction

Research has found a relationship between the tongue, jaw, breathing (airway function) and head position. Often there may be tension in the tongue, jaw muscles and the back of the head (occipital region) when we are at rest. The tension at the back of the head will commonly lead to a head position called “forward head posture.” When there is airway compromise it is common for patients to need to bring their head forward in order to breathe.

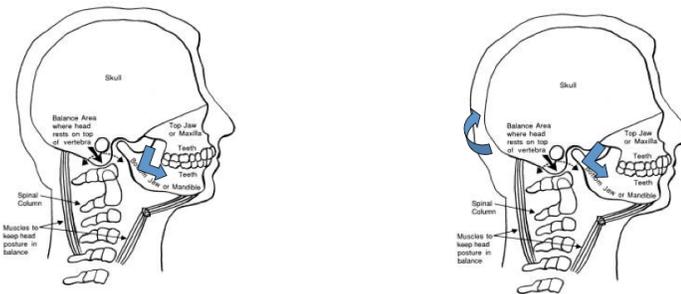
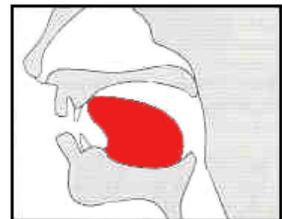
This condition can be noticed as a person attempts to swallow and will need to tilt their chin and forehead backwards. Also bringing the head more over their shoulders from the forward position may make it more difficult to swallow or breath. It is also common that this type of condition will lead to respiratory difficulties particularly at night where the jaw or TMJ, the related muscles, and tongue relate to a form of obstructive sleep apnea.



A series of passive exercises have been developed by Charles L. Blum, DC, a chiropractor in Santa Monica, California to help a patient gain awareness and develop skills to learn how to relax their jaw and occipital muscles while learning to place their tongue in its “physiological rest position.”

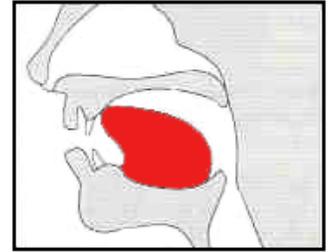
The exercises involve learning how to be aware of the positions of the tongue, jaw and back of the head. The process involves for very specific steps:

- 1. Placement of the tip of the tongue.**
- 2. Awareness of the “back” of the tongue.**
- 3. Awareness of the jaw position.**
- 4. Awareness of position of the back of the head and its muscles.**

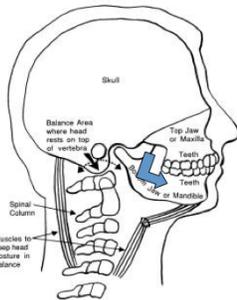


Patient TMJ Relaxation Exercise

1. **Placement of Tip of Tongue:** To maintain healthy airway space, which allows space for the air to flow, place the tip your tongue relaxingly near the roof of their mouth behind the front teeth. Ideally this is where the tongue will go when you make a “la” sound. This is called the physiological rest position for the tongue and where the tongue should rest at all times.



2. **Awareness of the “Back” of Tongue:** The next step is to focus your attention on the part of the tongue that is the farthest back in the throat and relax that part of the tongue as much as possible. This relaxation will allow the tongue to relax downward and forward and will further open the airway space.



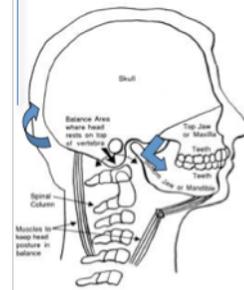
3. **Awareness of Jaw or Mandibular Position:** As the back part of your tongue relaxes allow your jaw to “drop” downward and forward as you attempt to relax the jaw muscles (most particularly the temporalis and masseters).

4. **Awareness of Occipital Bone Position:** As the jaw relaxes downward and forward relax the back of the head as if a helium balloon’s string is attached to the back of the head. As you surrender to this gentle lift allow the muscles at the back of the head to soften and relax.

Sometimes the suggesting to yourself that you can relax the back of your head by slightly nodding the nose downward will allow you to be able to affect your suboccipital tension.

As you attempt to maintain these four relaxation activities, allow for a slight separation of their teeth and allow your lips to touch.

Repeat this TMJ calming exercise and greater awareness will be imparted so that you can begin to learn how to consciously affect their jaw, tongue and suboccipital muscle tension. It is recommended that you perform these exercises with a smile every 20 seconds for the rest of your life.



Points to Focus Your Attention

1. Placement of Tip of Tongue
2. Awareness of the “Back” of Your Tongue
3. Awareness of Mandibular Position
4. Awareness of Occipital Bone Position