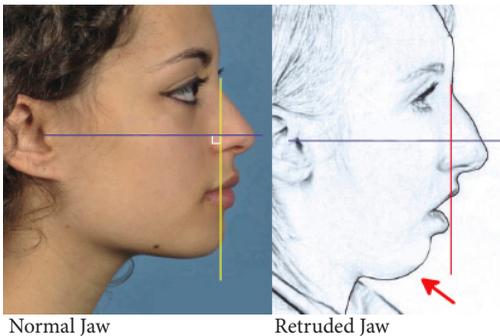


TMD... A REAL PAIN IN THE NECK

By Dr. Pamela Marzban

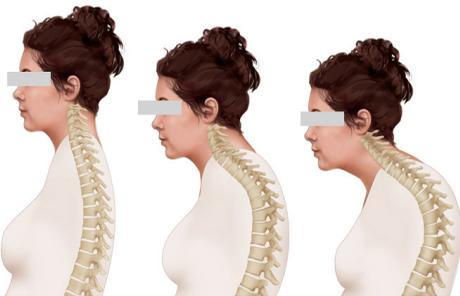
Have you ever looked at your posture? Do you know that poor posture can negatively impact your day to day well-being and it can be shaving years off your life?

There is a direct relationship between the way the lower jaw (the mandible) sits and the posture of the upper neck (cervical posture). When the mandible is retruded or set back, it forces the tongue back further in the throat, thereby narrowing the airway.



So, in order for a person to swallow and breathe better they have to bring their head in a forward position. We call this a forward head posture (FHP).

The human body will always accommodate to survive; therefore, every next breathe is imperative to survival and instinctively, the head will be in a constant forward position. People with FHP suffer problems such as headaches, sore neck, shoulder pain and back pain. It has been suggested that with every inch of FHP, 15 to 30 pounds of increased forces are put on the neck.



Continuous FHP leads to limited mobility of the neck, arthritic changes and chronic pain. When people suffer from chronic pain it has a significant impact on their lives. It takes a lot of energy to try and function when you are in chronic pain. Many people will seek help with their medical doctor for treatment and will sometimes find a solution that masks the symptoms such as pain killers and muscle relaxers but doesn't address the problem. This problem is not a medical problem, it is a functional problem and it needs a functional solution.

So, if FHP is a direct result of improper lower jaw posture, then we need to analyze the relationship between the lower and upper jaw for it is the upper jaw that the lower jaw sits into. Think of the upper jaw as the garage and the lower jaw is the car. Now think further, it is the fit between the upper and lower teeth that dictate the terminal stopping point of the lower jaw...make sense? If the bite is unbalanced, it puts everything else out of balance. This is called Temporomandibular Disorder or TMD. To help people with TMD we start by restoring balance with a functional appliance that supports the head and neck relationship.

Now, we have only touched on daytime issues. If the jaw is retruded back when we are upright, what happens when we lie down to sleep? Laying back causes the jaw and tongue to retrude even further. This is why people with FHP also snore and typically have suffer from sleep apnea.

Aside from anatomical issues, the trend in modern society of becoming too busy to exercise and building up our core strength while simultaneously sitting more in front of TV's and laptops or mobile devices is contributing to the changes in body posture.

Got you sitting up straighter? If you suffer from FHP or know anyone who does, find a dentist that has extensive training to help TMD sufferers and you may prevent a lifetime of medication and surgery.

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