



Face & Jaw Exercises

The Face & Jaw Exercises allow you to release and gain control of the muscles in the face and jaw. These exercises help to relieve tension in the face and jaw, tension headaches, and temporomandibular joint disorders.

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

Starting Position: You can practice these exercises either sitting up or lying down on your back. If you are sitting, make sure your back is fully supported so that you can completely relax and focus on the exercise. If you are lying on your back, have your knees bent and feet on the floor, a comfortable hip-width distance apart, so that you are using as little effort as possible to stay there.

Movement: Close your eyes. Slowly raise your eyebrows, contracting your forehead muscles. Then, slowly release to the count of eight. After you've completely released, repeat the movement one more time.

Now, squeeze your eyes shut, and then slowly release to the count of ten. Completely relax. Then repeat the movement one more time.

Now smile - make the biggest smile that you can. Then, slowly release to the count of eight. Completely relax. Then repeat the movement one more time.

Purse your lips, then slowly release to the count of eight. Completely relax. Then repeat the movement one more time.

Clench your jaw. Then, release slowly to the count of four. Let your jaw completely relax, so that there is some space between your upper and lower teeth. Now slowly open your jaw all the way to the count of twelve. When your jaw is all the way open, release as slowly as you can, to the count of twelve or even longer if you want. Repeat this clenching and then opening of the jaw one more time.

Now, shift your jaw to the right. Then release slowly, to the count of six, and then completely relax. Now shift your jaw to the left, and then slowly release to the count of six, and completely relax. Repeat this shifting of your jaw to the right and the left one more time.

Now you'll make circles with your jaw. Stay relaxed as you do these circles, and don't tense up. If you feel like you're using a lot of effort, or if you feel any pain or discomfort, make your circles smaller. First open your mouth, bringing your jaw downward. Then, bring your jaw around to the right. Then bring it upward so that you're bringing your lower lip closer to your nose. Then bring it around to the left. Then bring it downward again. Do one more circle in this direction, and then relax, and let your jaw be completely relaxed.

Now you can do circles in the other direction. Open your mouth, bringing your jaw downward. Then, bring your jaw around to the left, then upward so that you're bringing your lower lip closer to your nose, then around to the right, and then downward again. Do one more circle in this direction, and then relax, and let your jaw be completely relaxed.

ANATOMY OF THE FACE & JAW EXERCISES

The Face & Jaw Exercises release and bring voluntary control to the muscles of the face and jaw.

The muscles in the human face that express emotion are called mimetic muscles. The muscles we use when smiling, raising the eyebrows, and squeezing the eyes shut are among the mimetic muscles.

The Jaw Exercises involve the following movements of the mandible (jawbone):

Elevation:

- Masseter
- Temporalis
- Medial pterygoid

Depression:

- Geniohyoid
- Mylohyoid
- Stylohyoid
- Digastric
- Platysma

Lateral deviation (moving to one side):

- Lateral pterygoid
- Medial pterygoid

CONDITIONS HELPED BY THE FACE & JAW EXERCISES

The Face & Jaw Exercises help to alleviate the following conditions:

Tension in the face and jaw
Tension headaches
Temporomandibular joint disorders

HOW TO TEACH THE FACE & JAW EXERCISES

Get the student in their starting position. Instruct your student to either sit up with their back supported, or lie down in their neutral starting position. If they are lying down, they should have their knees bent and feet on the floor, a comfortable hip width distance apart. They can rest their arms on the floor by their sides.

Invite the student to close their eyes. Closing their eyes removes all the visual information that their brain would otherwise have to process. Keeping the eyes closed allows the student to focus completely on their internal sensations.

Teach the exercise. First, instruct your student to slowly raise their eyebrows, contracting their forehead muscles. Then, tell them to slowly release to the count of eight. After they've completely released, they should repeat the movement one more time.

Now instruct your student to squeeze their eyes shut, and feel the contraction of the muscles around their eyes. Then, tell them to slowly release these muscles to the count of ten. After they've completely released, they should repeat the movement one more time.

Now instruct your student to make the biggest smile that they can, and notice what muscles are contracting as they smile. Then, tell them to slowly release these muscles to the count of eight. After they've completely released, they should repeat the movement one more time.

Now instruct your student to purse your lips as if to kiss, and notice what muscles they feel contracting. Then, tell them to slowly release to the count of eight. After they've completely released, they should repeat the movement one more time.

Now instruct your student to clench their jaw, and notice what muscles they feel contracting. Then, tell them to release these muscles slowly to the count of four, and then to let their jaw completely relax so that there is a little space between their upper and lower teeth. Then instruct your student to slowly open their jaw all the way to the count of twelve. Then, tell them to release as slowly as they can, to the count of twelve

or even longer. Talk your student through the clenching and then opening of their jaw one more time.

Now instruct your student to shift their jaw to the right, and notice what muscles they feel contracting. Then tell them to slowly release these muscles to the count of six. Then instruct your student to shift their jaw to the left, and notice what muscles they feel contracting. Then tell them to slowly release these muscles to the count of six. Talk your student through these lateral jaw shifts one more time.

Now talk your student through the jaw circles. Remind them to stay relaxed while making these circles. Instruct them to first open their mouth, bringing their jaw downward. Then they should bring their jaw to the right, then upward, then around to the left and then downward again. Talk them through one more circle in this direction. One circle should take at least to the count of 16.

Now talk your student through the jaw circles in the opposite direction. Instruct them to first open their mouth, bringing their jaw downward. Then they should bring their jaw to the left, then upward, then around to the right and then downward again. Talk them through one more circle in this direction.

Common mistakes:

The only common mistake you are likely to see is students releasing too quickly. Teach your student to count (use the numbers I've provided as a guideline) as they release to ensure they are getting benefit from the movement. When you do these exercises for yourself, you will feel how important it is (as with all the exercises) to release slowly. Students often progress quickly in their ability to release the face and jaw muscles more slowly. Ask them to release more slowly with each repetition, and they will likely be surprised at how quickly they gain control of their face and jaw muscles.

Continued on next page

The following is an example of how I teach the Face & Jaw Exercises:

We're going to do some movements now that release the muscles in the face, and then we'll do movements that release the muscles that move the jaw. You can practice these exercises either sitting up with your back supported or lying down on your back. If you are lying on your back, your knees should be bent in order to protect your lower back. You can come back to your neutral starting position, with knees bent and feet on the floor, a comfortable hip-width distance apart, so that you're using as little effort as possible to stay there. Or, you can feel free to put a pillow or several pillows under your knees to help prop them up. If you are sitting up, make sure that your back is supported and your body feels relaxed.

Start by closing your eyes. Slowly raise your eyebrows, contracting your forehead muscles. Then, slowly release to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And relax. Again, slowly contract your forehead muscles, lifting your eyebrows all the way up, and release slowly to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And relax.

Now, squeeze your eyes shut, and slowly release to my count of ten: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. And then relax. Each time you practice releasing slowly, you'll find that your control has improved and it's easier to release slowly. Let's do that one more time. As you release, notice all the little muscles that were helping you to squeeze your eyes shut. Squeeze your eyes shut, all the way, and then slowly release to my count of ten: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Then completely relax and let go of all the tension in your face.

Now, I want you to smile - make the biggest smile that you can. Then, slowly release to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And then relax. One more time, smile as widely as you can, noticing all the muscles that are helping you smile. Then, slowly release to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And relax.

Now, purse your lips and make a kissy face. Slowly release to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And then relax. One more time, purse your lips and make a kissy face. Slowly release to my count of eight: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And relax.

Now we'll do movements that work with the muscles that control the movement of the jaw. First, clench your jaw. Then, release slowly to my count of four: one, two, three, four...and then relax, and let your jaw completely relax, so that there is some space between your upper and lower teeth.

Now, slowly open your jaw all the way to my count of twelve: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. When your jaw is all the way open, release as slowly as you can, to the count of twelve or even longer if you want. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve....and relax.

Again, clench your jaw. Then, release slowly to my count of four: one, two, three, four...and then relax, and let your jaw completely relax, so that there is some space between your upper and lower teeth.

Now, slowly open your jaw all the way to my count of twelve: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. When your jaw is all the way open, release as slowly as you can, to the count of twelve or even longer if you want. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve....and relax.

Now, shift your jaw to the right, and notice what muscles you're using to do the movement. Release those muscles slowly, to the count of six: one, two, three, four, five, six. And relax. Now shift your jaw to the left, noticing what muscles you're using, and then slowly release to the count of six: one, two, three, four, five, six. And relax.

Again, shift your jaw to the right, and notice what muscles you're using. Release those muscles slowly, to the count of six or longer if you can: one, two, three, four, five, six. And relax.

Now shift your jaw to the left, noticing what muscles you're using, and then slowly release to the count of six or longer: one, two, three, four, five, six. And relax.

Now you'll make circles with your jaw. Stay relaxed as you do these circles, and don't tense up. If you feel like you're using a lot of effort, or if you feel any pain or discomfort, make your circles smaller. First open your mouth, bringing your jaw downward. Then, bring your jaw around to the right...then upward so that you're bringing your lower lip closer to your nose...then around to the left....and then downward again...and do one more circle in this direction, bringing your jaw around to the right...then upward....then to the left....then downward.....and then slowly release, and relax, and let your jaw be completely relaxed.

Now you can do circles in the other direction. Open your mouth, bringing your jaw downward. Then, bring your jaw around to the left...then upward so that you're bringing your lower lip closer to your nose...then around to the right....and then downward again...and do one more circle in this direction, bringing your jaw around to the left...then upward....then to the right....then downward.....and then slowly release, and relax, and let your jaw be completely relaxed.