

Living with TMJ Pain: A Patient Case Report

Meet Sarah

Sarah is a 34-year-old marketing executive who started experiencing **jaw pain and tightness** around her temples and cheeks about a year ago. She noticed it was worse in the mornings, after long meetings, or during stressful periods at work. She often caught herself clenching her jaw during the day and grinding her teeth at night—something her partner pointed out after hearing it in her sleep.

Her symptoms included:

- A constant ache in the jaw muscles, especially around the temples and jawline

- Headaches that started at the side of her head and radiated forward

- Jaw stiffness, especially in the mornings

- Clicking sounds when opening her mouth widely

Despite trying over-the-counter pain relief, warm compresses, and even changing her pillow, nothing seemed to work long-term.

Diagnosis: Muscular TMJ Disorder

After visiting her dentist and being referred to a specialist, examination and an MRI scan was performed.

Sarah was diagnosed with **muscular temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD)**—a type of TMJ disorder caused primarily by **muscle tension** rather than damage inside the jaw joint itself.

Unlike TMJ disorders that involve the joint structure (such as disc displacement or arthritis), Sarah's pain was due to **overactive and strained jaw muscles**, particularly the **masseter and temporalis muscles**, from long-term clenching and grinding.

Treatment Plan: Physiotherapy and Botox

Sarah's care team recommended a **non-surgical, step-by-step approach** to managing her symptoms.

1. Physiotherapy

She started with **jaw-focused physiotherapy**, including:

Gentle jaw stretching and relaxation exercises

Posture correction (especially while sitting at a desk)

Soft tissue massage techniques

Education on how to avoid clenching

Within a few weeks, Sarah noticed some improvement, especially when combined with stress reduction and avoiding chewy foods.

2. Botox Injections

Because her muscles were still very tight and sore despite therapy, her clinician recommended **Botox injections** into her **masseter and temporalis muscles**.

Botox works by **temporarily relaxing overactive muscles**, reducing tension, and preventing involuntary clenching. The procedure was quick, done in the clinic, and relatively painless.

Results

Within two weeks of Botox treatment, Sarah reported:

A significant drop in muscle pain

Fewer morning headaches

A noticeable reduction in jaw tension and clenching

Better sleep and improved concentration at work

She continued physiotherapy exercises at home and scheduled follow-up Botox treatments every 3-4 months as needed.

Sarah's Advice to Others:

"I never realized how much stress was affecting my jaw. Once I understood that the pain was muscle-related, everything changed. Physiotherapy taught me how to care for my jaw, and Botox gave me the relief I didn't think was possible."

Key Takeaways for Patients

TMJ pain isn't always caused by joint damage—**muscle tension is a common and treatable cause**.

Physiotherapy is a helpful first step and can improve movement, reduce pain, and prevent further issues.

Botox is a safe and effective treatment for reducing jaw muscle tension in chronic cases.

Early treatment and stress management are important in preventing symptoms from worsening.