

Maintaining Jaw Opening

Most people can open their mouth 35 to 55 millimetres. This is about the width of three fingers.

Surgery or radiation therapy in the head and neck area can cause difficulties in jaw opening. A reduced jaw opening is also known as **trismus**.

When you are not able to open your mouth wide, it can be hard to:

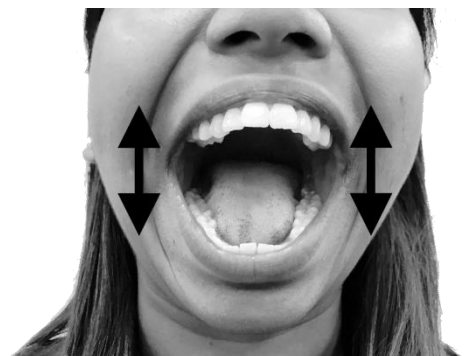
- Eat and drink
- Talk
- Clean your teeth and mouth

Jaw Exercises

Below are some exercises you can do to prevent development of trismus. Even when you do not have trismus, you should do these to prevent difficulties. Once trismus develops, it can be very hard to treat.

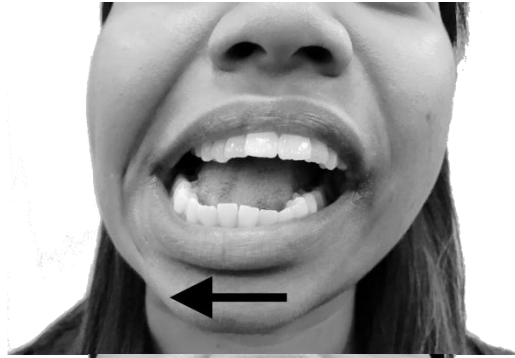
You should aim to do these exercises **5 times a day**.

Active Stretching



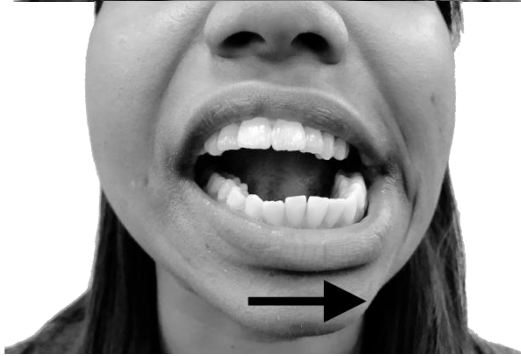
1. Open your mouth wide, until you can feel a stretch. You should not feel pain.

Hold for 5 seconds.
Do this 5 times.



2. Move your jaw to the side.

Hold for 5 seconds.
Do this 5 times.



3. Move your jaw to the other side.

Hold for 5 seconds.
Do this 5 times.

Passive Stretching



1. Place your thumb on your top teeth or gum.
2. Place your index finger on your bottom teeth or gum.
3. Hold your mouth open with your fingers, until you can feel a stretch. You should not feel pain.

Hold for 5 seconds.
Do this 5 times.

If you have had **surgery**, please check with your doctor or therapist before starting these exercises.

If these exercises cause **pain or numbness**, stop doing them immediately and inform your doctor or therapist.