

Trigeminal Neuralgia

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NINDS Trigeminal Neuralgia Information Page

Synonym(s): Tic Douloureux
Reviewed 05-29-2001

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What is Trigeminal Neuralgia?

Trigeminal neuralgia, also called tic douloureux, is a condition that affects the trigeminal nerve (the 5th cranial nerve), one of the largest nerves in the head. The trigeminal nerve is responsible for sending impulses of touch, pain, pressure, and temperature to the brain from the face, jaw, gums, forehead, and around the eyes. Trigeminal neuralgia is characterized by a sudden, severe, electric shock-like or stabbing pain typically felt on one side of the jaw or cheek. The disorder is more common in women than in men and rarely affects anyone younger than 50. The attacks of pain, which generally last several seconds and may be repeated one after the other, may be triggered by talking, brushing teeth, touching the face, chewing, or swallowing. The attacks may come and go throughout the day and last for days, weeks, or months at a time, and then disappear for months or years.

Is there any treatment?

Treatment for trigeminal neuralgia typically includes anticonvulsant medications such as carbamazepine or phenytoin. Baclofen, clonazepam, gabapentin, and valproic acid may also be effective and may be used in combination to achieve pain relief. If medication fails to relieve pain, surgical treatment may be recommended.

What is the prognosis?

The disorder is characterized by recurrences and remissions, and successive recurrences may incapacitate the patient. Due to the intensity of the pain, even the fear of an impending attack may prevent activity. Trigeminal neuralgia is not fatal.

What research is being done?

Within the NINDS research programs, trigeminal neuralgia is addressed primarily through studies associated with pain research. NINDS vigorously pursues a research program seeking new treatments for pain and nerve damage with the ultimate goal of reversing debilitating conditions such as trigeminal neuralgia. NINDS has notified research investigators that it is seeking grant applications both in basic and clinical pain research.

Organizations

American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA)

P.O. Box 850

Rocklin, CA 95677-0850

ACPA@pacbell.net

<http://www.theacpa.org>

Tel: 916-632-0922 800-533-3231

Fax: 916-632-3208

National Chronic Pain Outreach Association (NCPOA)

P.O. Box 274

Millboro, VA 24460
ncpoa@cfw.com
<http://www.chronicpain.org>
Tel: 540-862-9437
Fax: 540-862-9485

Trigeminal Neuralgia Association

2801 SW Archer Road
Suite C
Gainesville, FL 32608
[tnанational@tna-support.org](mailto:tнанational@tna-support.org)
<http://www.tna-support.org>
Tel: 352-376-9955
Fax: 352-376-8688

National Foundation for the Treatment of Pain

P.O. Box 70045
Houston, TX 77270
markgordon@paincare.org
<http://www.paincare.org>
Tel: 713-862-9332
Fax: 713-862-9346

International Radiosurgery Support Association (IRSA)

P.O. Box 5186
Harrisburg, PA 17110
getinfo@irsa.org
<http://www.irsa.org>
Tel: 717-260-9808
Fax: 717-260-9809

Mayday Fund [For Pain Research]

c/o SPG
136 West 21st Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10011
mayday@maydayfund.org
<http://www.painandhealth.org>
Tel: 212-366-6970
Fax: 212-366-6979

Related NINDS Publications and Information

- [Chronic Pain: Hope Through Research](#)
Information booklet on pain compiled by the National Institute of Neurological

Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- Headache: Hope Through Research

Information booklet about headaches, including migraines.

- Trigeminal Neuralgia: Opportunities for Research and Treatment

Summary of a workshop, "Trigeminal Neuralgia: Opportunities for Research and Treatment," September 1999.

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Provided by:

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

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