

CLUSTER HEADACHES AND ATTACKS

Cluster Headaches Can Occur at Any Time to Anyone at Any Age

Cluster Headaches Can Cause Debilitating Pain Making it Difficult to Perform Everyday Functions

Cluster headaches should not be confused with typical migraines or occasional headaches. Cluster headaches can cause so much disruption that a patient may need to seek emergency care.

Please use this guide as a resource for knowledge and understanding of cluster headache causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.

01 | Cause

Cluster headaches are believed to be caused by abnormalities in the hypothalamus or “biological clock”. Neurological evidence is prevalent since cluster headaches do not stem from environmental factors such as foods, smells, stress, lighting etc. There are some indications of genetic links between patients who suffer from cluster headaches.

02 | Symptoms

Cluster headaches occur very abruptly without any reason or direct cause. A cluster headache period can last from 6 to 12 weeks and can have a pattern of incidence, for example: occurring every winter. Cluster headaches typically occur in these episodes and subside for an extended period of time. There is no way to definitively predict a start and end period of cluster headaches or how long a patient will be in remission. Common symptoms of a cluster headache are:

- Excruciating pain, generally situated in or around one eye, but may radiate to other areas of your face, head, neck and shoulders
- One-sided pain
- Restlessness
- Excessive tearing
- Redness in your eye on the affected side
- Stuffy or runny nose on the affected side
- Forehead or facial sweating
- Pale skin (pallor) or flushing on your face
- Swelling around your eye on the affected side
- Drooping eyelid

03 | Diagnosis

Diagnosis is different for cluster headaches and can be complicated. Distinguishing patterns and types of pain are necessary. Neurological examination testing senses, reflexes and nerves help in diagnosing cluster headaches. Imaging tests such as CT scans or MRI's may be necessary.

04 | Treatment

Depending on age of patient, severity of attacks, length of attacks and frequency, there are is an array of treatment options that may be suitable. Short term fast acting treatments can include:

- Oxygen
- Triptans
- Octreotide
- Local anesthetics
- Dihydroergotamine

Possible preventative treatments given at the beginning of a cluster episode are meant to suppress attacks and can include:

- Calcium channel blockers
- Corticosteroids
- Lithium carbonate
- Nerve block
- Melatonin

Learn more about neurological conditions at:

<http://aao.org>

***Did You Know?
Cluster headaches can last
for months***

References

<https://www.webmd.com/migraines-headaches/guide/cluster-headaches#1>

https://www.medicinenet.com/cluster_headaches/article.htm