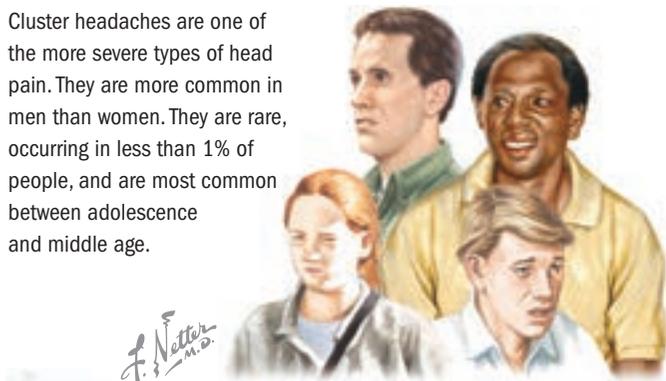


MANAGING YOUR CLUSTER HEADACHES

Cluster headaches are one of the more severe types of head pain. They are more common in men than women. They are rare, occurring in less than 1% of people, and are most common between adolescence and middle age.



The exact cause is unknown. Triggers can include exposure to hydrocarbons (perfumes, petroleum solvents), drugs, foods, smoking, drinking alcohol, and changing the normal sleep pattern.



The pain is usually constant, intense, and nonthrobbing, deep in and around the eye on one side of the head. Pain often moves into the forehead, temple, and cheek. Other symptoms are watery eyes, drooping eyelids, and vision problems.



Your health care provider makes a diagnosis from your medical history and examination.

What Are Cluster Headaches?

Cluster headaches are one of the more severe types of head pain. They are more common in men than women. The pain is usually constant, intense, and nonthrobbing, deep in and around the eye on one side of the head. Pain often moves into the forehead, temple, and cheek. Pain may leave as quickly as it began or fade slowly.

Cluster headaches are unpredictable. Several months can pass without headaches, but then they start again. They are rather rare, occurring in less than 1% of people, and are most common between adolescence and middle age.

What Causes Cluster Headaches?

The exact cause is unknown. Triggers can include drugs (nitroglycerin), certain foods, smoking, drinking alcohol, changing the normal sleep pattern, heat, and exposure to hydrocarbons (perfumes, petroleum solvents).

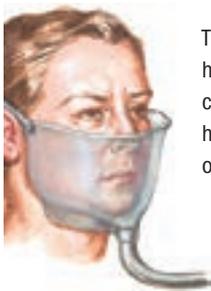
What Are the Symptoms of Cluster Headaches?

Headaches occur in groups or clusters. Each cluster usually begins in spring or fall and lasts about 2 to 3 months. Headaches may occur nightly after 1 to 2 hours of sleep or several times during the day and night. Each attack may last almost an hour. They often have a pattern, occurring at the same time each day for 6 to 12 weeks, followed by no headaches for many months or years. Other symptoms are watery eyes, drooping eyelids, and vision problems on the side of the headache.

How Are Cluster Headaches Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis from the medical history and examination. Other tests are generally not needed. If the symptom pattern changes, the health care provider may order additional tests such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the head to look for other disorders that can mimic cluster headaches.

MANAGING YOUR CLUSTER HEADACHES



The goal is to help symptoms, because cluster headaches cannot be cured. Certain medicines can prevent more attacks. For breakthrough headaches, breathing pure oxygen (100% oxygen at 12 liters/minute) may provide relief.

Take your medicines as prescribed. Check with your health care provider before using over-the-counter pain relievers.



Avoid triggers of attacks, such as alcohol, foods containing nitrates, tobacco, and strenuous exercise.



Call your health care provider if you have weakness, numbness, or tingling in your arms or legs; you have trouble walking or talking; or you have severe vomiting.

How Are Cluster Headaches Treated?

Many treatments exist for cluster headaches. The goal is to help symptoms because cluster headaches cannot be cured. Certain medicines can prevent more headache attacks. For breakthrough headaches (which occur even with preventive medicine), inhaling pure oxygen may provide some relief. The health care provider may prescribe oxygen therapy for use at home if breakthrough headaches occur often. If attacks are less frequent, drugs given by mouth, such as triptan medications, verapamil, or the steroid methylprednisolone, also work and are more convenient and less expensive than pure oxygen therapy.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Cluster Headaches:

- ✓ **DO** keep to an adequate and regular sleep schedule.
- ✓ **DO** take your medicines as prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** check with your health care provider before using over-the-counter pain relievers.
- ✓ **DO** keep your follow-up health care provider appointments.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have a fever with your headache.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have a headache that is more severe than usual and your usual medicine doesn't help it.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have weakness, numbness, or tingling in your arms or legs or you have trouble walking or talking.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have severe vomiting that your medicine doesn't control.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have problems with your medicine.

- ⊗ **DON'T** use alcohol, foods containing nitrates, and tobacco.
- ⊗ **DON'T** expose yourself to oil-based solvents; avoid high altitudes and strenuous exercise. These may start an attack.

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NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Headache Society
Tel: (800) 255-2243
Website: <http://www.achenet.org>
- National Headache Foundation
Tel: (888) 643-5552
Website: <http://www.headaches.org>