

Hints and Tips

- Keep active and maintain a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet
- Learn more about managing chronic pain as this will help you to come to terms with your symptoms
- Visit your dentist regularly and ask for advice about good oral hygiene. This will help prevent tooth decay or gum disease which can make pain symptoms worse.

Treatment is available if you develop a low mood, are feeling sad or unable to cope. Please ask for professional help.

Contact Details

Oral and Maxillofacial Department

County Hospital

Nurse's Office Tel: 01785 230577

Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm

Royal Stoke Hospital

Nurse Base Tel: 01782 674801

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Use the space below to write in the name and contact details of your Consultant

Name

Tele:

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Patient Information Leaflet

Atypical Facial Pain



Please speak to a member of staff if you need this leaflet in large print, braille, audio or another language

Introduction

This leaflet provides you with information on atypical facial pain and will help you to understand causes and symptoms. If after reading the leaflet you have any questions, please speak to one of the nursing staff.

What is atypical pain?

This is a pain affecting the cheeks, eyes, jaws and non-muscular areas of the face. It is a chronic long-term pain condition also known as persistent orofacial pain.

Examination of the mouth and face usually reveals no abnormalities or obvious sources of pain. This does **not** mean that we think you are imagining your symptoms. The pain is real and arises in cramped muscles and dilated blood vessels as a response to stress.

Some experience a continuous pain or severe discomfort in teeth or tooth sockets of previously extracted teeth. Where there is no true dental cause, this is called atypical odontalgia. Dental treatment can increase the pain, sometimes moving from tooth to tooth.

Patients sometimes suffer from other stress-related problems such as tension headaches, migraines, chronic lower back pain, painful periods, irritable bowel and itchy skin.

Anti-depressant medications may be prescribed as these can help relieve the pain in some patients. To be effective these need to be taken over several months.

Causes of atypical facial pain

The cause is unknown however, in some patients the pain starts after they have had surgery, dental treatment or an injury to the face/mouth.

It is thought due to the pain conducting nerves becoming overly sensitive that instead of the pain ceasing, the pain will continue to persist even when everything has healed. This can lead to atypical facial pain.

Symptoms of atypical facial pain

Symptoms include:

- A dull ache.
- Crushing or burning sensation.
- Throbbing in the face or mouth.

The pain may not always stay in one area but may move to other parts of the face.

The pain is usually continuous but may come and go. Common painkillers do not usually help the pain.

Diagnosing atypical facial pain

There is no diagnostic test for atypical facial pain. The diagnosis relies largely on the description of symptoms and examination of the face, neck, jaw, mouth, teeth and gums.

In order to exclude other causes of facial pain, X-rays of the teeth, head and neck may be required.

Treatment of atypical facial pain

There is no cure and so treatment is given to reduce the severity of symptoms and pain.

Anti-depressant drugs can be used to reduce the severity of any pain by reducing the sensitivity of the nerves controlling the pain.

Other treatments may include cognitive behavioural therapy which helps to be able to cope with any long-term symptoms.