

Hints and Tips

- Maintain good oral hygiene and visit your dentist regularly to prevent any tooth decay as this can make the condition worsen.
- Identify the activities that trigger an attack of trigeminal neuralgia so you can avoid the triggers.
- Cover your face when going out in cold weather.
- Drink through a straw to avoid touching a trigger zone in your mouth.
- Avoid very hot or very cold foods and drinks.

Contact Details

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a member of the team.

Oral and Maxillo-Facial Department County Hospital

Nurse's Office Tel: 01785 230577
Medical Secretary Tel: 01785 230565
Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

Stoke Hospital

Nurse's Office Tel: 01782 674801
Medical Secretary Tel: switchboard 01782
715444

Scan me for the BOAMS website



Patient Information Leaflet

Trigeminal Neuralgia



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

Introduction

This leaflet will give you information on trigeminal neuralgia to 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 trigeminal neuralgia?

This is a condition that affects the trigeminal nerve (one of the large nerves in the head and neck area).

- It causes sudden attacks of severe and excruciating pain on one side of the face.
- The pain is a sharp stabbing or electric shock-like pain. It may be triggered by touching the face, shaving, eating, talking or tooth brushing.
- The attacks can last from seconds to a few minutes. They can occur several times a day for weeks and months at a time.
- Pain can be felt in the upper or lower jaw in the cheek or the eye and forehead. This will depend on which branch of nerve is affected.

Treatment with surgery

If medication fails to control the pain then surgical intervention may be required.

A procedure called cryotherapy can be used to freeze part of the nerve to temporarily prevent pain attacks in the affected area.

If MRI scans show there is compression of the nerve causing the neuralgia, an operation can decompress or destroy part of the nerve.

Causes of trigeminal neuralgia

The cause is unknown however, the symptoms may be due to a blood vessel pressing on the trigeminal nerve in the skull.

This causes pain and stops the nerve working properly.

In rare cases, the cause may be due to diseases such as multiple sclerosis or a tumour compressing on the nerve.

Diagnosing trigeminal neuralgia

There is no diagnostic test for trigeminal neuralgia. The diagnosis relies largely on the description of symptoms and examination of the mouth.

X-rays of the teeth and jaw may be taken to rule out other reasons for the pain. Blood tests also may be necessary. An MRI scan if required will assess if the nerve is being compressed.

Treatment of trigeminal neuralgia

There is no cure, however there are options to help manage the pain.

Effective medicines are anticonvulsants, similar to those used to treat epilepsy. Common painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen do not work effectively.

For the anticonvulsants to be effective they need to be taken regularly even when there is no pain felt.

A combination of different medications can be taken to reduce symptoms which you will be advised of.

A severe attack of pain can be treated by using a local anaesthetic injection into the trigger area, similar to that used by a dentist. This can provide relief for a few hours and allow other drugs to work more effectively.