

# Cluster Headache

Cluster headaches are severe headaches on one side of your head that happen in groups, or "clusters."

Cluster headaches can be very painful.

The pain is often called the worst type of headache pain.

Cluster headaches come in cycles (also called cluster periods). Most people who get cluster headaches have one or two cluster periods each year.

A cluster period might last 1 month or longer. Some people have cluster periods that last a year or more.

As you get older, your cluster cycles may happen less often. Some people eventually stop getting cluster headaches.

Cluster headaches run in families, but it's not clear why some people get cluster headaches and others don't.

The main symptom of cluster headaches is a severe burning or sharp, piercing pain on one side of your head. The pain spreads out from your temple and eye.

The pain usually gets bad very fast. The pain gets worse within 5 to 10 minutes after the headache starts and can last for 15 minutes or longer.

Cluster headaches usually happen at the same time of day each time you get them. But they can happen at any time.

A doctor can usually tell if you have cluster headaches by asking about your symptoms and examining you.

Your doctor may order other tests, such as a CT scan or an MRI, if the doctor thinks your symptoms may be caused by another disease.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for cluster headaches.

But you may be able to reduce how often you have them, how bad they are, and how long they last.

Medicines may stop a cluster headache after it starts or prevent more headaches from occurring.

It's important to treat a cluster headache as early as possible. The sooner you treat the headache, the less painful it may be.

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The choice of medicine may depend on the time of day when your headaches tend to occur. Some people may need a combination of two or three medicines.

Some treatments and medicines can stop a cluster headache while it's happening.

For example, oxygen therapy is one of the best treatments to stop a cluster headache.

Other treatments include triptans as a shot, nose spray, or a pill; a shot of octreotide; or lidocaine nose drops.

Some medicines that can help prevent cluster headaches during a cluster period include: Suboccipital steroid injections; Galcanezumab injections; Verapamil, Lithium, and Melatonin.

Finding the right medicine can take some time. Keeping track of your symptoms can help your doctor determine the proper medicine. You can keep track by using a headache diary.

A headache diary can give you and your doctor clues to help you manage your headaches.

Write down when and how often the headaches happen, how severe they are, and what you think may be causing them.

Certain things may be more likely to cause a headache during a cycle. These are called triggers. Avoiding them may help prevent headaches.

Triggers include: Drinking alcohol. Sleep problems. Increases in body temperature, for example during exercise. Nitrates which are found in wine, cured meats, aged cheeses, and some medicines. And seasonal allergies.

Having cluster headaches can be scary. But even though they are very painful, cluster headaches don't cause long-term harm.

And you may be able to reduce how often you have them, how bad they are, and how long they last.