Trigeminal Neuralgia

What is it?

Trigeminal neuralgia is a severe, chronic, infrequent, sudden burning or shock-like pain in the face that rarely lasts more than a few seconds or a minute. The cause of this pain is the compression of the trigeminal nerve in the head. It is usually felt on one side of the chin or cheek. Episodes can last for days, weeks, or months at a time and then disappear for months or years. The disorder is characterized by recurrences and remissions and occurs mostly in people over the age of 50, but it can occur at any age.

What do you need to know?

Symptoms

Before the actual pain, you may have:

- Itchy or numb feeling
- Steady and sore pain

Drugs and Treatment

- Your physician may prescribe multiple medications
- Analgesics and opioids are usually not helpful
- Follow your physician’s instructions carefully and take your medications regularly
- Surgical treatments are available as well. Discuss with your physician if this option is suitable for you.

Diet

- **Eat low-saturated fat diet:** seafood, beans, rice, pasta, bread, vegetables, fruit and very small amounts of chicken
- Limit your intake of red meat, whole milk, cheese, butter, cream, pies, cakes, cookies, chocolate, snacks, nuts and ice cream
- Stay away foods that cause sensations of heat (salsa, chili, hot sauce), cold, mint, sweetness, and acidity

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Stay away from foods that have strong odors and may trigger pain such as hot mustard, garlic, onions…
Consult your dietitian for further nutritional management and information

**Therapeutic Measures**

Other techniques that you may consider to lessen the pain include acupuncture, vitamin therapy, nutritional therapy, and electrical stimulation of the nerves. Ask your physicians about these options

**Considerations**

The disease may be part of the normal aging process but in some cases it can be linked with other disorders such as multiple sclerosis.

Pain may be triggered by activities such as: Shaving, washing your face, applying makeup, brushing your teeth, eating, drinking, talking, or being exposed to the wind.