Cluster Headache

“The Worst Pain Known to Man”

Cluster headache (CH) is a primary headache syndrome. Cluster Headache is considered one of the worst pain conditions that humans endure. In fact, it has been nicknamed “suicide headache” because it can drive people to the edge in the moments of excruciating pain; however, it is critical to note that these feelings are temporary. You can get through it!

Cluster pain is usually focused on one side of the head, in the eye and/or temple region. CH often occur in cyclical patterns or clusters, which is how they got this name.

There are two types of CH. The episodic sufferer (ECH), will have regular pain for a specific time each year. The bouts may last from several weeks to months and are usually followed by a time of pain free remission. Remission can last for weeks, months or even years.

The chronic sufferer (CCH) will not have a significant period of remission and often will have attacks on a daily basis, often multiple times per day coupled with an ongoing “baseline” headache.

It is important to find a neurologist who specializes in headache in order to get proper diagnosis and care.

Treatments

Cluster Headaches have no cure and not everyone responds to treatment the same way. As a result, a number of different abortives and preventatives are often tried with each sufferer until a treatment plan that offers relief is found.

Symptoms

By Mayo Clinic Staff
A cluster headache strikes quickly, usually without warning. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Excruciating pain, generally located in or around one eye, but may radiate to other areas of your face, head, neck and shoulders.
- One-sided pain
- Restlessness
- Excessive tearing
- Redness in your eye on the affected side
- Stuffy or runny nasal passage in your nostril on the affected side of your face
- Sweaty, pale skin (palor) on your face
- Swelling around your eye on the affected side of your face
- Drooping eyelid

The pain of a cluster headache is often described as sharp, penetrating or burning. People with this condition say that the pain feels like a hot poker being stuck in the eye or that the eye is being pushed out of its socket.

People with cluster headache appear restless. They may pace or sit through the attack. In contrast to people with migraine, people with cluster headache usually avoid lying down during an attack because this position seems to increase the pain.

You are Not Alone!

Living with CH can be very difficult and often frightening to both the sufferer and their family and friends.

The chronic pain often leads to anxiety issues and depression. It can affect every aspect of the sufferers life including work, interactions with friends and family, and the overall quality of life.

Speaking with a counsellor or finding a support group specializing in cluster headache can help to sort out feelings and experiences the CH sufferer deals with on a daily basis. Support groups specific to CH and other TACs are a great place to share stories and find others who have similar experiences. Not all support groups have to be in-person. In fact, it would be difficult to find one locally for a rare disorder like CH.

The Cluster Headache Support Group, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to helping Cluster Headache and other TAC sufferers and their supporters. We provide practical, relevant information, help people learn to live with this debilitating disorder, and drive research to find better treatment options that will help reduce their time to living pain free.

We CAN help.

By Mayo Clinic Staff
A cluster headache strikes quickly, usually without warning. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Excruciating pain, generally located in or around one eye, but may radiate to other areas of your face, head, neck and shoulders.
- One-sided pain
- Restlessness
- Excessive tearing
- Redness in your eye on the affected side
- Stuffy or runny nasal passage in your nostril on the affected side of your face
- Sweaty, pale skin (palor) on your face
- Swelling around your eye on the affected side of your face
- Drooping eyelid

The pain of a cluster headache is often described as sharp, penetrating or burning. People with this condition say that the pain feels like a hot poker being stuck in the eye or that the eye is being pushed out of its socket.

People with cluster headache appear restless. They may pace or sit through the attack. In contrast to people with migraine, people with cluster headache usually avoid lying down during an attack because this position seems to increase the pain.

Reprinted from the MayoClinic.com article “Diseases and Conditions, Cluster Headache, Symptoms” (http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cluster-headache/basics/symptoms/con-20031706)

© Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved.

Background photographic art courtesy of Jarid Waniger

Find us: chsg.org facebook.com/groups/CHSupport

The Cluster Headache Support Group, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to helping Cluster Headache and other TAC sufferers and their supporters. We provide practical, relevant information, help people learn to live with this debilitating disorder, and drive research to find better treatment options that will help reduce their time to living pain free.

We CAN help.

Cluster pain is usually focused on one side of the head, in the eye and/or temple region. CH often occur in cyclical patterns or clusters, which is how they got this name.

There are two types of CH. The episodic sufferer (ECH), will have regular pain for a specific time each year. The bouts may last from several weeks to months and are usually followed by a time of pain free remission. Remission can last for weeks, months or even years.

The chronic sufferer (CCH) will not have a significant period of remission and often will have attacks on a daily basis, often multiple times per day coupled with an ongoing “baseline” headache.

It is important to find a neurologist who specializes in headache in order to get proper diagnosis and care.

Treatments

Cluster Headaches have no cure and not everyone responds to treatment the same way. As a result, a number of different abortives and preventatives are often tried with each sufferer until a treatment plan that offers relief is found.

Symptoms

By Mayo Clinic Staff
A cluster headache strikes quickly, usually without warning. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Excruciating pain, generally located in or around one eye, but may radiate to other areas of your face, head, neck and shoulders.
- One-sided pain
- Restlessness
- Excessive tearing
- Redness in your eye on the affected side
- Stuffy or runny nasal passage in your nostril on the affected side of your face
- Sweaty, pale skin (palor) on your face
- Swelling around your eye on the affected side of your face
- Drooping eyelid

The pain of a cluster headache is often described as sharp, penetrating or burning. People with this condition say that the pain feels like a hot poker being stuck in the eye or that the eye is being pushed out of its socket.

People with cluster headache appear restless. They may pace or sit through the attack. In contrast to people with migraine, people with cluster headache usually avoid lying down during an attack because this position seems to increase the pain.

Reprinted from the MayoClinic.com article “Diseases and Conditions, Cluster Headache, Symptoms” (http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cluster-headache/basics/symptoms/con-20031706)

© Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved.

Background photographic art courtesy of Jarid Waniger

Find us: chsg.org facebook.com/groups/CHSupport

The Cluster Headache Support Group, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to helping Cluster Headache and other TAC sufferers and their supporters. We provide practical, relevant information, help people learn to live with this debilitating disorder, and drive research to find better treatment options that will help reduce their time to living pain free.

We CAN help.