

Cluster Headache

What is a cluster headache?

A cluster headache is a rare type of headache in which there is very bad pain on one side of the head, often around the eye. The pain lasts from 15 minutes to two hours, but comes back at about the same time each day. The pain may happen up to eight times in a single day.

Are there any other symptoms?

With the headache, you may notice other changes on the same side of your face, such as eye redness or tearing, stuffy or runny nose, or swelling of the eyelid, forehead, or face. You may also have a droopy eyelid or changes in the size of the pupil.

Who gets it?

Cluster headache is more common in men than in women. It usually starts between 20 and 40 years of age.

How is it treated?

Treatment starts with avoiding things that trigger the headache. These can include alcohol, tobacco smoke, nitroglycerin (a medicine for certain heart conditions), or things you may

be allergic to. Once symptoms start, oxygen therapy or prescription medicines are the best treatments. Your doctor may also prescribe medicines that can reduce the number of headaches.

What can I do to prevent it?

Identifying and avoiding the things that trigger your headache is important. It may help to keep a record of when your symptoms start and what you are doing before they begin.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/headaches.html>

American Headache Society
http://www.achenet.org/resources/information_for_patients/

National Headache Foundation
<http://www.headaches.org/>

Organization for Understanding Cluster Headaches
<http://www.ouch-us.org/>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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