

Cluster headaches

Cluster headaches are rare, extremely painful and debilitating headaches that occur in groups or clusters. Cluster headaches are recurrent, severe headaches that occur in "clusters" during periods of time called cluster periods or episodes. They are occasionally referred to as "alarm clock headaches", because of the regularity of their timing and their ability to wake a person from sleep. Cluster headaches are a fairly common form of chronic, recurrent headache, and are classified as vascular headaches. Cluster headaches do not appear to be related to other illnesses or to diseases of the brain. Often they go undiagnosed for many years, being confused with migraine or other causes of headache. Although cluster headaches are more common in men, more women are starting to be diagnosed with this problem.

Attack

Attacks often occur at night and wake you from sleep. Attacks may occur twice a week up to several times a day. Attacks are triggered in some patients by stress, allergens, seasonal changes, or poor nutrition. Attacks may last 4 to 12 weeks, and then disappear for months or years. Patients who are sensitive to alcohol note that attacks are triggered within 5 to 45 minutes after the ingestion of modest amounts of alcohol. Glare, stress, or certain foods may trigger an attack. Within the world of cluster headaches, there is a small group who have chronic cluster headaches, meaning they don't go more than about a month or so without attack.

Conditions

Persons who have experienced both cluster headaches and other painful conditions (childbirth, migraines) report that the pain of cluster headaches is far worse, significantly more severe than a migraine. The amount of pain is hard to measure, but those who have experienced other painful headache conditions such as migraines, say that cluster headaches are far more painful. Nighttime headaches are very rarely due to serious conditions but if you do find yourself waking up with an extremely severe headache, you may need to see a doctor immediately on the remote possibility that you are suffering from a brain tumour. A blocked nasal passage, rhinorrhea, red eye, and sweating and pallor of the forehead and cheek are often found, but their absence does not exclude the diagnosis. The location and type of pain has been compared to a 'brain-freeze' headache from rapidly eating ice cream; this analogy is limited, but may offer some insight into the cluster headache experience.

Magnesium

People who suffer from cluster headaches often have low blood levels of magnesium, and trials show that intravenous magnesium injections may relieve a cluster headache episode. Intravenous magnesium sulphate rapidly alleviates headaches of various types.

Oxygen

Oxygen therapy has been found to be useful in treating cluster headaches, and it has proven very useful for night-time headaches. Oxygen inhalation is the safest and most effective treatment if used at the first sign of an acute cluster attack. Sometimes though, oxygen may only delay rather than stop the attack and pain may return. Briefly inhaling 100 percent oxygen through a mask at a rate of 6 to 8 litres a minute provides dramatic relief for most who use it. This type of treatment is quite severe and would only be used after eliminating many other types of treatment.

Treatments

Because the pain is so severe, rapid and effective treatments are needed. Treatments to stop cluster headaches that have already started are called abortive headache treatments. With abortive treatments often only decreasing the duration of the headache and preventing it from reaching its peak rather than eliminating it entirely, preventive maintenance is always indicated for cluster headaches, to be started at the first sign of a new cluster cycle. There are non-conventional and accidental treatments that have also been proven to prevent cluster headache. Imitrex is touted by

the medical profession as a cure for this condition, but as is often the case, long term dependence on prescribed medication can bring about its own set of problems. Regular exercise and certain alternative treatments and natural cures, such as relaxation exercises, may also help prevent some headaches. If your cluster headaches worsen, change their pattern, or become chronic, you may want to talk to your health professional about different treatments, or preventive maintenance.

Conclusions

Cluster headaches typically start at an age from 20 to 40 years, and are three to four times more common in men than women. Cluster headaches, like migraines, can be extremely painful and can actually interfere with the daily lives of the people who suffer them. Cluster headaches have been reported to affect many members of the same family. Cluster headaches are resistant to analgesic painkillers because these drugs take effect slowly. Oxygen therapy is one of the treatments of choice and seems to be safe and effective. Good nutrition, including the best quality goji juice is also vital in the preventative maintenance process. A regular supply of clean filtered water is essential.

Try using a therapeutic pillow, one that supports the head and neck. This will reduce the symptoms of morning migraines and cluster headaches and allow you to sleep more soundly and comfortably.

A daily intake of Himalayan Goji Juice and/or daily intake of B Vitamins, Magnesium and Feverfew will assist tremendously in treating migraines, but you must do this consistently – this is of the utmost importance. We can help to keep you on track and remind you to take your supplements daily by joining our reminder program.

Try also using a cold and hot pack for immediate and temporary relief.