



Do you have episodes of intense pain in the face, which feels like stabbing pain or electrical shocks? There is a disease called **trigeminal neuralgia (TN or TGN)** which is characterized by these symptoms.

WHAT IS TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA?

Trigeminal neuralgia (TN) is chronic pain that occurs after damage to one or both of the trigeminal nerves, which are located on either side of the face. Because nerves are damaged, TN is a type of **neuropathic pain**.

WHAT CAUSES TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA?

Trigeminal neuralgia (TN) occurs if one or both of the trigeminal nerves in the face are damaged. A compression of the trigeminal nerves can be caused by an aneurysm, stroke, tumor, cyst, or a traumatic event such as a car accident. TN is also found in about 3-4% of people with Multiple Sclerosis, which can damage the trigeminal nerve.

Damaged nerves cannot correctly transmit signals from the skin to the brain. Instead, these signals become exaggerated, causing chronic pain that may persist for months or even years. This can lead to pain attacks at the slightest stimulation of any area served by the nerve as well as hinder the nerve's ability to shut off the pain signals after the stimulation ends.

WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA SYMPTOMS?

The signs and symptoms of TN, which is a type of chronic pain, are generally limited or localized to the face. This is why TN is also referred to as a type of **localized neuropathic pain (LNP)**. TN is characterized by episodes of intense facial pain that last from a few seconds to several minutes or hours. It may repeat various times throughout the day. Individual attacks usually affect one side of the face at a time. About 10% of cases are bilateral, occurring on both sides of the face.

In many patients the pain is spontaneous, without any stimulation. The attacks are said to feel like stabbing electric shocks, or burning, pressing, crushing, exploding or shooting pain. The intense flashes of pain can also be triggered by vibration or contact with the cheek (e.g. when shaving, washing the face or applying make-up), brushing teeth, eating and drinking. Sometimes on the affected sensitive skin even wind can cause an episode.

WHAT CAN PATIENTS DO?

It is important to get active. With a correct diagnosis and appropriate treatment, relief from TN pain is possible. If you have long-term or chronic pain and think that it might be TN, please fill out the 'my pain questionnaire' on **www.mypain-feelslike.com**, print out the results and see your doctor.