



Dr. Rahul Kulkarni

Consultant neurologist

MD (Internal medicine), DM (Neurology), DNB (Neurology)

# Trigeminal Neuralgia

## What is trigeminal neuralgia?

Trigeminal neuralgia is a condition of where you get recurring pain on one side of your face. Sensations over face are carried to brain by a nerve called 'trigeminal' nerve. In this disorder, there is dysfunction of one or more of the three branches of this trigeminal nerve.

The pain in trigeminal neuralgia is severe, recurrent, lasting for seconds to minutes. You may experience sharp cutting pain as a sudden current of pain. This pain occurs over days to years. There may be a period when pain becomes less and restarts again. The pain may be felt over cheek, nose, jaw, eye, lips, gums, chin or over forehead. It starts on one side of face and remains on same side. It can occur spontaneously, but in many cases it starts on touching a particular point or area of face like lip or tip of nose. It may also start if you brush, shave, eat, drink, blow your nose or even touch your face, smile and talk.

## What causes trigeminal neuralgia?

In majority of the cases, trigeminal neuralgia is caused compression of the trigeminal nerve by a blood vessel. This compression occurs inside skull and not over face. Less commonly, multiple sclerosis or a tumor can cause trigeminal neuralgia. In many cases, however, there is no apparent cause.

## How is trigeminal neuralgia diagnosed?

The type and site of pain of trigeminal neuralgia is the clue for its diagnosis. There is no specific test for identifying trigeminal neuralgia. Your doctor may advice tests to rule out other causes of similar pain. These may involve X-rays, CT scan or MRI scan.

## How is trigeminal neuralgia treated?

The pain of trigeminal neuralgia is unusual in the sense that it does not respond to standard pain-killers or analgesics. Certain other medicines are useful for this pain. These medicines are also used for treatment of epilepsy. You may experience good pain relief with these medications. Your doctor may ask you continue them for a long period. Never experiment with these medicines. The duration of treatment will vary from case to case and your doctor is best judge for it.



**Dr. Rahul Kulkarni**

**Consultant neurologist**

MD (Internal medicine), DM (Neurology), DNB (Neurology)

In your pain is not relieved adequately with the medicines, a surgical procedure is done to relieve compression of the nerve by bleed vessel. Alternatively, radiofrequency currents are used to destroy the damaged nerve by passing a needle.

It is important that person with trigeminal neuralgia should receive appropriate treatment as soon as possible, as the pain can interfere with normal routine activities such as eating and sleeping and can even lead to depression.

### **Where can I get additional information about trigeminal neuralgia?**

- <http://www.fpa-support.org/>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001751/>

