



Health wealth

Bust this cluster headache

Cluster headache, also called 'suicide headache', is a neurological disease that involves, as its most prominent feature, an immense degree of pain. Cluster refers to the tendency of these headaches to occur periodically, with active periods interrupted by spontaneous remissions. The cause of the disease is, at present, unknown. It affects approximately 0.1 per cent of the population. Men are more susceptible to it than women.

A few symptoms of cluster headache are:

- Unbearable excruciating pain that is concentrated in one side of the head
- Lack of a periodic pattern (a pattern that runs in cycles)
- Continuing low-intensity

headaches between high-intensity headaches

- Partial or little response to standard treatments
- The headaches usually occur in a cluster and then disappear. This may range from two weeks to three months.
- Preliminary signs similar to a migraine — hence the confusion leads to ineffective medication

Many experts believe that cluster headache and migraine headache share a common cause — that begins in the trigeminal nerve, which is the nerve that carries sensation about the head, brain, face and ends with the blood vessels surrounding the brain. Others believe that cluster headache comes from within the deep vascular channels in the head. For example,



the cavernous sinus and does not involve the trigeminal system.

Although, the cause of this brain disorder is not yet identified in entirety yet, some crucial triggers that may lead to this pain are:

- Excessive intake of alcohol, chocolates or nicotine (smoking)

- Excessive exposure to sun and heat
- May be hereditary in some cases

- Imbalanced sleeping patterns — excessive or deficient

As against a migraine pain which settles down by taking a nap or resting in a dark and a quite room, cluster head ache has the following effects:

- Restlessness — pacing around in pain (as adequate oxygen intake is known to soothe the pain)
- Conjunction of one side of the face features — teary eyes, runny/blocked nose, swelling and sweating

Cluster headaches can be cured with proper medication. "An executive came to see me complaining of severe headache. He had been experiencing these headaches for years that lasted for two to three months. Such was the intensity of the pain that he would often cry. He was given medicine and his condition improved. Today, he is fine," says Dr R Reddy, senior consultant, Neurology, Max Healthcare.