Cluster Headache

Cluster headaches are recognized by their pattern of deep, intense head pain and normally occur on one side of the head. Cluster headaches typically:

- Are severe in nature.
- Occur repeatedly over weeks to months at a time and then followed by periods of no headaches.
- Can last 15 minutes to 3 hours.

CAUSE

The exact cause of a cluster headache is not known. Some things can "trigger" a cluster headache, such as:

- Smoking.
- Alcohol.
- Not getting enough sleep.
- High altitude travel, such as airline travel.
- Change of seasons, such as Spring and Fall.
- Certain foods like:
  - Chocolate.
  - Aged cheeses.
  - Foods or drinks that contain nitrates, glutamate, aspartame or tyramine.

SYMPTOMS

A cluster headache will usually have the following symptoms:

- Severe pain that begins in or around the eye or temple.
- The pain is always on one side of the head.
- Nausea, feeling sick to your stomach or vomiting.
- Sensitivity to light.
- On the side of the pain:
  - Eye redness.
  - Tearing.
  - Nasal stuffiness.
  - Runny nose.

DIAGNOSIS

- Cluster headaches are diagnosed based on your symptoms, physical exam and whether your symptoms meet diagnosis criteria.
- Your caregiver may order a CT scan of your head or other lab tests to see if your headaches are caused from other medical conditions.

TREATMENT

- People with cluster headaches can get help.
- Medications can help with pain relief.
- Oxygen can help with pain relief.
- Some people may need a combination of medicines for cluster headaches. Your caregiver can develop a treatment plan that can be helpful to you.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If your caregiver has prescribed medicine for your headaches, take as told by your caregiver.
- It is very important to keep any follow-up appointments or referrals provided by your caregiver.
- Take medications recommended by your caregiver before air travel to help prevent attacks.
- Biofeedback programs may help reduce headache pain. Discuss this with your caregiver.
- It may be helpful to keep a headache diary. This may help you find a trend as to what may be triggering your

headaches.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have any changes from your previous cluster headaches either in intensity or frequency.
- You are not getting relief from the medications you are taking for cluster headaches.
- You faint or pass out.
- Develop weakness or numbness, especially on one side of your body or face.
- develop double vision.
- You develop *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting.
- You cannot keep your balance, or have difficulty talking or walking.
- You develop neck pain or neck stiffness.
- An oral temperature above 101.5° F (38.6° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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