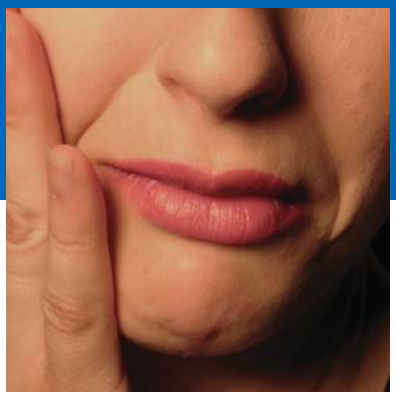

Trigeminal Neuralgia
The Gamma Knife Center

FACTS

What is trigeminal neuralgia?

Trigeminal neuralgia (TN) is a severely painful condition brought on by pressure on the trigeminal nerve where it leaves the brain stem. Because this nerve is responsible for sensation to areas of the face, people with TN may experience sharp, electric shock-like pain to the cheeks, jaw, teeth, gums and lips.

The pain may come and go for several hours and usually occurs on only one side of the face. It may be triggered by any light touch around the mouth or face or by the act of eating, shaving or brushing one's teeth. People with TN often suffer from weight loss because they are unable to get proper nutrition without causing themselves extreme pain.

People with atypical trigeminal neuralgia experience a different kind of pain. It is not triggered by touch, occurs constantly rather than intermittently, and has been described as aching, migraine-like, burning or stabbing.

How is TN diagnosed?

Diagnostic imaging is used to identify the source of pressure on the trigeminal nerve, which could be a tumor, a cyst or a nearby blood vessel pushing on the nerve. In some cases, diagnostic imaging may identify multiple sclerosis as well, since TN is present in an estimated 5 percent of people with that disorder.

How is TN treated?

TN can be treated either medically or surgically. However, some of the more popular medications available for TN have troublesome side effects while the surgical techniques are invasive, painful and may cause permanent damage to the face. By contrast, Gamma Knife radiosurgery offers patients many advantages:

- Requires no incisions, anesthesia or pain medication
- Is an acceptable treatment for patients who are elderly or have other medical conditions
- Is an excellent option for those who cannot tolerate medications or are poor candidates for open surgery
- Is a safe, effective and the treatment least likely to cause post surgical complications

What is the Gamma Knife procedure?

Gamma Knife radiosurgery applies hundreds of pencil-thin beams of radiation to a target area to destroy unhealthy tissue. The beams are precisely focused to minimize damage to surrounding healthy tissue. Patients are conscious and can communicate with the treatment team at all times by video cameras and an intercom. The procedure takes approximately two to three hours and patients return home the same day.

What results are produced with TN?

Pain relief is achieved in 85 to 90 percent of patients. Most patients experience relief within four weeks although in some cases, it may take several months to see results. Pain may recur after several years in some cases. The procedure can be repeated if four months have passed since the initial treatment.

For information:

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This information is not a substitute for the advice your doctor may give you based on his or her knowledge of your condition.



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