

Trigeminal Neuralgia

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Trigeminal neuralgia is an uncommon disorder characterized by recurrent attacks of lancinating pain in the trigeminal nerve distribution. Typically, brief attacks are triggered by talking, chewing, teeth brushing, shaving, a light touch, or even a cool breeze. The pain is nearly always unilateral, and it may occur repeatedly throughout the day. The diagnosis is typically determined clinically, although imaging studies or referral for specialized testing may be necessary to rule out other diseases. Accurate and prompt diagnosis is important because the pain of trigeminal neuralgia can be severe. Carbamazepine is the drug of choice for the initial treatment of trigeminal neuralgia; however, baclofen, gabapentin, and other drugs may provide relief in refractory cases. Neurosurgical treatments may help patients in whom medical therapy is unsuccessful or poorly tolerated. (*Am Fam Physician* 2008;77:1291-1296.