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Tips to maintain  
a better life with  
Trigeminal Neuralgia

# TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA

## Prevalence

**Trigeminal neuralgia** is a chronic pain condition that affects the **trigeminal** nerve, which carries sensation from your face to your brain. If you have **trigeminal neuralgia**, even mild stimulation of your face - such as from brushing your teeth or putting on makeup - may trigger a jolt of excruciating pain. The annual incidence of Trigeminal Neuralgia for women is approximately 5.9 cases/100,000 women in India. For men, it is approximately 3.4 cases/100,000 men.

TN has a higher incidence in women than men. The onset of pain occurs most frequently in patients aged 50 years and older.

## Symptoms

The type of symptom and intensity of pain depends on patient to patient. The common symptoms are as follows:

- ▶ Episodes of severe, shooting or jabbing pain that may feel like an electric shock
- ▶ Spontaneous attacks of pain or attacks triggered by things such as touching the face, chewing, speaking or brushing teeth
- ▶ Bouts of pain lasting from a few seconds to several minutes
- ▶ Episodes of several attacks lasting days, weeks, months or longer - some people have periods when they experience no pain
- ▶ Constant aching, burning feeling that may occur before it evolves into the spasm-like pain of trigeminal neuralgia

## Do's



## Don'ts

- ▶ Use cold or hot fomentation to keep the facial muscles relaxed
  - ▶ Try to sleep on the non affected side so that the muscles do not strain after waking up
  - ▶ Cover your face in cold weather and keep instant warm packs to soothe the pain
  - ▶ Make a record of things that increase and decrease the out breaks of the trigeminal neuralgia so that it can be avoided
  - ▶ Keep your prescribed medicines with you at all times
  - ▶ Eat soft food, as excessive chewing may aggravate the pain
- ▶ Avoid meddling with facial area
  - ▶ Avoid drafts of cold air or stimulation by hugging

## Exercises

Physical activity is important for overall health and wellness. Regular activity is a key factor in managing Trigeminal Neuralgia along with meal planning, taking medication as required, and stress management.

### Tips on exercises for Trigeminal Neuralgia

#### Strengthening Exercise

Strengthening exercises are best to perform between Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) flare-ups. Here are two strengthening exercises:

- ▶ Place a thumb under your chin and push your chin downward against it. Continue opening the mouth against moderate force from your thumb, and then hold it open for 5-10 seconds.
- ▶ Open your mouth as wide as you comfortably can. Put your index finger between your chin and lower lip. Push inward while closing your mouth against the resistance.

#### Relaxation Exercise

TMJ pain is often the product of tension-producing stress. Simple relaxation exercises can help.

Here are two relaxation exercises:

- ▶ Slowly inhale, allowing your stomach rather than your chest to expand. Exhale slowly while making your exhalation last about as long as your inhalation. Repeat 5-10 times.

- ▶ While sitting or lying in a comfortably supported position, tense and release tension from each muscle in your body. Begin with the feet and work upwards to the head.

This second exercise is a progressive relaxation exercise to help people become more aware of areas of tension. It may also equip them with the skills to consciously release that tension.

#### Stretching Exercise

Stretching exercises can help with TMJ pain during a flare-up. They reduce muscle and joint tension, offering longer-term relief:

- ▶ Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Open your mouth as wide as you comfortably can, and hold for 5-10 seconds.
- ▶ Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Glide your lower jaw out as far as it will go and then back in as far as it will go. Hold for 5-10 seconds in each position.
- ▶ Slowly and steadily open your mouth as wide as it will comfortably open, with your tongue in a neutral position. Hold for 5-10 seconds then close your mouth. Next, open your mouth slightly and glide your lower jaw back and forth 5-10 times.
- ▶ Close your mouth. With your head facing straight ahead, glance to the right with your eyes only. Extend your lower jaw to the left and hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat on the opposite side.