

SUMMER 2015

PainNews

News from **The Pain Center of Arizona** www.ThePainCenter.com

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QA
AND

with
Dr. J. Gabriel Tsang

TPC
The Pain Center
OF ARIZONA

What Causes

TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA?



Located within the brain, the trigeminal nerve is an essential structure responsible for receiving sensations from three different areas in the face, as well as telling the muscles in your jaw to move. When this nerve becomes inflamed, patients develop a chronic condition called trigeminal neuralgia that causes severe facial pain.

SYMPTOMS

- A sharp pain on one side of the face, usually to the right.
- Pain triggered by touching the face, drinking cold beverages, or eating.
- Intense pain from everyday tasks like shaving and putting on makeup.
- Shooting pain that occurs frequently and spans several days or weeks.

CAUSES

Most often, trigeminal neuralgia occurs when the trigeminal nerve touches a blood vessel. This may not seem like a significant problem, but when a blood vessel comes into contact with a nerve, the myelin sheath protecting it becomes damaged. If this happens, the nerve is disrupted and will begin to act erratically.

The condition may be a result of aging, but could also be associated with chronic health conditions like multiple sclerosis.

A patient may also develop trigeminal neuralgia if they recently underwent facial surgery and the nerves surrounding the surgical site have become damaged. Sometimes trigeminal neuralgia is caused by a tumor pressing against the nerve, but this is one of the most infrequent causes of the disease.

TREATMENTS

Treatment usually begins with anticonvulsant medication, which is used to stop the nerve from firing pain signals. Muscle relaxants and other interventional pain treatments may be considered to minimize pain. If medication does not sufficiently ease your pain, or stops working over time, surgery may be necessary. The responses to these different treatment options vary from patient to patient.

If your pain does return, there are other, less invasive treatment options to consider like injections. Acupuncture and nutritional therapy may also be used to complement interventional treatment. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of each procedure to determine the best treatment option for you.

As you go through your treatment, take precautions to lower your pain as much as possible. Our experts recommend avoiding face touching and tell others which side of your face your pain is on. Avoid windy or breezy places that could cause discomfort.

QA AND



Dr. J. Gabriel Tsang, MD | Prescott Clinic

Dr. J. Gabriel Tsang is double board certified in Pain Management and Anesthesiology. Dr. Tsang graduated from The University of Sydney, NSW, Australia and completed his residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. He then completed fellowship training in pain management at the prestigious MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas before coming to Arizona.

Why did you choose pain management?

During my anesthesiology training, I had always enjoyed the pain management aspect of the field. By pursuing chronic pain management as a subspecialty, I get to develop a long-term relationship with patients. It always makes me proud to help people gain control over their pain and regain function in their lives.

What is the most common misconception about chronic pain that you see?

Among both patients and practitioners, there is the misconception that opioids are the only pain medication out there. Opioids can be very effective and useful, but in the right context. There are many other medications that can provide excellent analgesia as well. Sometimes it takes the right combination of medications to maximize the benefit to the patient.

How important is a good attitude for chronic pain patients?

A good attitude is very important, and not just for chronic pain patients. Studies have shown individuals with depressed moods report higher pain scores and have an increased sensitivity to painful stimuli.

Staying positive, however, can be very difficult when dealing with chronic pain. By helping patients gain control over their pain, we are also aiming to provide hope that the pain can be managed and the patients can have their lives back.

What are you most excited about in coming to The Pain Center?

Being able to work with a group of like-minded health care professionals who are dedicated to providing high quality care to patients.

The Pain Center of Arizona is a well-established group with reputation of excellence in healthcare. With this team, I have the support to deliver the best care possible.

Learn more at
www.thepaincenter.com

Dry Heat **vs.** Humidity

Does One Cause More Pain?

Many chronic pain patients have said their symptoms worsen when the weather changes, especially during times of low barometric pressure and high humidity. While there is no solid evidence to support this, an overwhelming number of people have reported increased muscle pain, joint pain, and headaches before a storm.

In one study, researchers determined dampness and hot temperatures are not culprits of this phenomenon, but found that air pressure could be the reason behind increased pain. They theorize that when air pressure drops, as it does before a storm, tissues can inflame and push on surrounding nerves and muscles.

Out-of-state patients or residents new to our state may feel their pain decrease—that's all thanks to Arizona's dry heat! If you will be traveling to a humid climate this summer, talk to your TPC physician about ways to prevent or ease pain symptoms on your vacation.



Arthritis-Fighting Smoothie

This Healthline recipe is perfect for arthritis patients because it contains anti-inflammatory properties that boost the immune system, improve bone and tissue health, and reduce inflammation. Start your day with this green tea smoothie to combat your joint pain and add a little flavor to your breakfast! Enjoy!

- 1 ½ cups of cold green tea**
- 2 cups of frozen raspberries**
- 1 banana**
- 1 tablespoon of honey**
- ¼ cup of protein powder**

Place all of the ingredients in a blender and puree!