

Jefferson Headache Center Newsletter

CLUSTER HEADACHE EDITION

Edition 1

TOP STORIES ↗

- ◆ What are Cluster Headaches?
- ◆ Interesting Cluster Facts
- ◆ Cluster Headache Research at the Jefferson Headache Center
- ◆ Contact Information



Dear Cluster Sufferer:

The purpose of this Newsletter is to share information with you about cluster headaches as well as current research projects being conducted at the Jefferson Headache Center.

We hope that you will find the information within this newsletter helpful, either for yourself or for a family member or friend.

What Are Cluster Headaches?

Cluster headaches are very severe one-sided headaches that occur one to six times each day and are short in duration. Typically, each cluster attack lasts from 15 minutes to 3 hours. The pain is frequently in or around one eye. The attacks usually occur frequently and over a period of several weeks and then may disappear for months at a time. This is why they are called "cluster" headaches, because they occur in clusters or groups.

Cluster headache patients face significant difficulties in the management and treatment of their problems:

- In two surveys, patients reported a delay in the diagnosis of their headaches of between one and six years. In most of these cases, patients were inappropriately treated for other headaches (including having sinus surgery).
- Treatment for cluster headaches is very problematic because most attacks come on suddenly, occur daily, and episodic cycles may continue for weeks or months. Most oral medications used for other headaches act too slowly to have much effect on a cluster headache, which typically lasts about an hour. Injected or intravenous headache medications may work but they cannot be used on a daily basis. The emphasis in managing cluster attacks, therefore, is in preventing them.
- Cluster headaches are difficult to study. They are very uncommon, so there are few well-controlled investigations of this problem.

For these reasons, we continue to pursue treatment options for these headaches by doing well designed research studies. Our hope is that we will then be able to provide treatment that has been proven to be effective.

Cluster Headache Research at the Jefferson Headache Center:

A Research Study Examining the Use of Depakote ER and Depacon for Cluster Headaches

- Depakote has been used for the treatment of cluster headaches for many years and has shown to be effective

We are currently conducting a research study on the use of Depakote in its tablet and intravenous form (Depacon) for the treatment of cluster headaches. All qualified participants will undergo three days of intravenous (IV) infusion with Depacon followed by Depakote tablets. Participants will then be sent home with enough Depakote tablets until their cluster cycle ends or for a maximum of 6 weeks. Participants will be asked to keep a headache diary logging each attack. All medication, visits with the study coordinator, and all research procedures are done free of charge. Compensation for time and expenses will be provided.

A Research Study Examining the Use of Topiramate as a Treatment for Cluster Headache

- Topiramate has been shown to be effective in the preventive treatment of migraine in several trials.
- Topiramate has also been shown to be effective in an open-label trial for cluster headaches.

We are currently studying topiramate for the prevention of cluster headache. Following a 3-day baseline period (taking no study medication), qualifying subjects will be randomized (assigned randomly) to receive either topiramate or placebo (an inactive pill). Subjects will be followed for 8 weeks. Subjects maintain a diary for the entire duration of the trial. Compensation for time and expenses will be provided.

A Research Study Examining the Use of Zolmitriptan (Zomig) Nasal Spray as an Acute Treatment for Cluster Headache

- Oral Zolmitriptan has been shown in studies to an effective acute treatment for cluster headaches.
- Zolmitriptan nasal spray may offer relief even faster than the oral version. In migraine it has been effective in as few as ten minutes.

We are currently studying zolmitriptan nasal spray for the acute treatment of cluster headache. Qualifying subjects will be given study medication and instructed to treat three separate cluster attacks. A diary will be provided to record response to study treatment. Patients will return one month after enrollment to turn in any unused study drug and their diaries. The three treatments will consist of two active nasal sprays and one placebo (inactive substance) assigned in random order. Compensation for time and expenses will be provided.

Interesting Cluster Headache Facts:

- Cluster headache is the most painful of the primary headache disorders
- Unlike migraines, cluster headaches occur primarily in men with hazel or light colored eyes
- Sometimes called the "suicide headache"
- Cluster headaches frequently occur during the first REM stage of sleep; patient is awakened by the head pain 60 to 90 minutes after they go to sleep
- Cluster patients frequently have a "leonine" appearance; deep creases around the nose, square jaw, "orange peel" skin

Cluster Headache Resources:

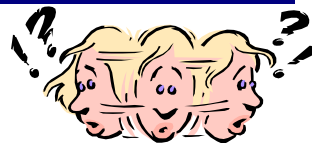
A Worldwide Cluster Headache Support Group www.clusterheadaches.com

Free, public service chatrooms for patients and caregivers to find support and help www.braintalk.org

National Headache Foundation
www.headaches.org

American Council for Headache Education
www.achenet.org

Contact Information:



**Jefferson Headache Center
Clinical Research Department
111 South 11th Street/ Suite 8130
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 955-3824**

www.jefferson.edu/headache
Kathleen.bradley@jefferson.edu

