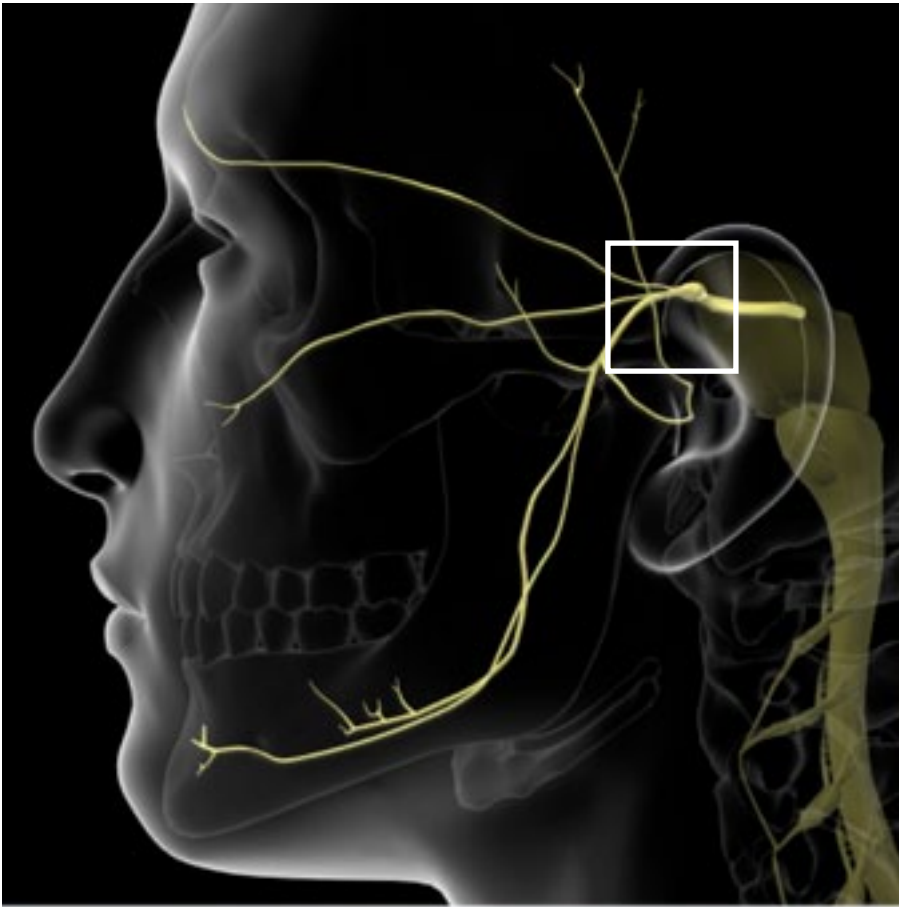


TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA (TN)



Overview

This chronic condition is caused by a misfiring of the trigeminal nerve. An attack causes brief episodes of extreme, shooting pain.

About the Trigeminal Nerve

The trigeminal nerve consists of a thick root at the base of the brain and three branches that extend to the face. These branches sense touch and control the chewing muscles.

Why It Strikes

TN usually occurs when an artery or vein compresses the root of the trigeminal nerve, causing it to misfire. The nerve can also be irritated by a tumor or other disorder.

Triggering an Attack

Flashes of pain are often triggered by some type of contact with the face. Brushing teeth, applying makeup, shaving, eating, talking, or being exposed to wind can all trigger an episode.

Symptoms

A TN attack may last from a few seconds to a few minutes. People describe the pain as like a sudden burn or an electric shock, typically felt on only one side of the face. It's an incredibly intense sensation that can be physically incapacitating.

Treatment

Treatment options include medication, various types of surgical procedures, and a radiology procedure called stereotactic radiosurgery (or Gamma Knife).

