

# Trigeminal Neuralgia

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**Trigeminal neuralgia (tic douloureux)** is a pain usually characterised by a brief volley of electric shock-like, stabbing pain. It is most frequently involves the mandibular branch of the trigeminal nerve. Its usually last seconds to minutes during the early years but may then in later years manifest as a constant pain, sometimes ‘aching’ indicating a regional myofascial pain , and sometimes ‘burning’ indicative of neuropathic pain. It is often triggered by simple stimuli such as brushing the teeth, shaving, touching the face or even the movement of air on the face. Its is slightly more prevalent in females (3:2) in the 60-70 yr age group.

The cause in 60-88% of cases is vascular compression of the trigeminal ganglion leading to demyelination and hence ‘short-circuiting’ of A-b fibres with A-d and C-fibres. Some patients respond to well to psychological counselling techniques (cognitive behavioural therapy) suggesting stress is also a causal or associated factor. The first-line treatment of choice are anticonvulsants medication. Surgery such as microvascular decompression or radiofrequency gangliolysis offer good results although there is associated long term morbidity of facial paraesthesia that can be a major complaint among patients.