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Face pain

Face pain may be dull and throbbing or an intense, stabbing discomfort in the face or forehead. It can occur in one or both sides.

Causes

Pain that starts in the face may be caused by a nerve problem, injury, or infection. Face pain may also begin in other places in the body.

- Abscessed tooth (ongoing throbbing pain on one side of the lower face that gets worse with eating or touching)
- Cluster headache
- Herpes zoster (shingles) or herpes simplex (cold sores) infection
- Injury to the face
- Migraine
- Myofascial pain syndrome
- Sinusitis or sinus infection (dull pain and tenderness around the eyes and cheekbones that gets worse when you bend forward)
- Tic douloureux (trigeminal neuralgia)
- Temporomandibular joint dysfunction syndrome

Sometimes the reason for the face pain is unknown.

Home Care

Your treatment will be based on the cause of your pain.

Painkillers may provide temporary relief. If the pain is severe or does not go away, contact your health care provider or dentist.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if:

- Face pain is accompanied by chest, shoulder, neck, or arm pain. This could mean a heart attack. Call 911 or your local emergency number.

- Pain is throbbing, worse on one side of the face, and aggravated by eating. Contact a dentist.
- Pain is persistent, unexplained, or accompanied by other unexplained symptoms. Contact your primary provider.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

If you have an emergency condition (such as a possible heart attack), you will first be stabilized. Then, the provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and do a physical exam. You will be referred to a dentist for tooth problems.

You may have the following tests:

- Dental x-rays (if a tooth problem is suspected)
- ECG (if heart problems are suspected)
- Tonometry (if glaucoma is suspected)
- X-rays of the sinuses

Neurological tests will be performed if nerve damage could be a problem.

References

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