



PRIMARY STABBING HEADACHE

Primary stabbing headache (also previously known as idiopathic stabbing headache, ice-pick headache, jabs and jolts, ophthalmodynia periodica) manifests itself in very brief, sharp or jabbing pain in the head (not usually the face), either as a single stab or a series of brief repeated volleys of pain.

The pain itself generally lasts a fraction of a second but can last for up to one minute in some sufferers, and may move from one area to another in either the same or opposite side of the head. The cranial autonomic symptoms associated with cluster headache and other trigeminal autonomic cephalgias are normally absent in primary stabbing headache.

The International Headache Society diagnostic criteria is:

- Head pain occurring as a single stab or a series of stabs
- Exclusively or predominantly felt in the distribution of the first division of the trigeminal nerve (orbit, temple and parietal area)
- Stabs last for up to a few seconds and recur with irregular frequency ranging from one to many per day
- No accompanying symptoms
- Not attributed to another disorder

Primary stabbing headaches are considered a primary headache because there isn't a deeper underlying cause. The headache itself is the problem. Although they may occur independently, they're more likely to occur as part of another primary head pain disorder. A secondary headache has another cause such as a tumor, stroke, or something as simple as not eating. The short, sharp headaches of a Primary Stabbing Headache can be located anywhere on the head, but they're usually located near the orbit, temple, or parietal region (the posterior roof and sides of the skull).

Primary stabbing headaches usually occur by themselves rather than during a Migraine attack or headache. Usually, they occur a few times a day at most. In rare cases, however, they occur frequently through the day, requiring treatment. The major problem with treatment, of course, is that the pain is so brief, it's gone before the patient can even take medication. As with other shorter lasting primary headaches, primary stabbing headache tends to respond well to a medication called indomethacin (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug).