Cluster Headache, which has been nicknamed by some sufferers as the “killer” or “suicide” headache, has been described as the most painful type of headache one can endure. It is one of the primary headaches that is not caused by other disorders. This headache has been recognized for at least a century, but the term, Cluster Headache, was coined relatively recently.

The term “cluster” derives attacks occurring repeatedly within a relatively limited time span, called the cycle, period, bout, or cluster.

On average, a cycle lasts 6-12 weeks. During a cycle, attacks appear daily.

In between cycles, the patient is completely headache-free.

During a cycle, attacks occur daily, usually once a day at the same time.

| 50+% | Most commonly about 2-3 hours after falling asleep. | Intensity peaks within 10-15 minutes. | Pain lasts usually 40-90 minutes. | Temple Above the eye Behind the eye |

The area of pain is small, strictly one-sided. It has been described as the most severe form of pain a human can endure.

The patient can often point to the pain’s location with the point of a finger. The pain is often described as boring, burning, piercing, sharp, knife-like, or a “hot poker in the eye.”

Fortunately, cluster headache is not very common. The prevalence is about 10 per 100,000 in male patients. This is about 19 to 25 times less than the prevalence of migraine in men.

There are no racial, ethnic, or genetic factors that have been documented. Cluster headaches can begin at any age, but the average mean age of onset is during the late 20s and early 30s.

To learn more about cluster headaches, visit www.headaches.org or read the most recent issue of HeadWise. Interviews with headache specialists can be arranged, upon request, by emailing mfranklin@headaches.org or calling 1-312-274-2653.