

Occipital Neuralgia

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Situation: *Occipital neuralgia* (“base of the head nerve pain”) is a term used to describe various headache pains that occur at the base of the skull. Not all headaches are occipital neuralgia. There are numerous other types of headaches, including classic migraines, atypical migraines, cluster headaches, trigeminal neuralgia, arterial temporalis, and even the classic hangover headache.

Causes: *Occipital neuralgia* can be caused by trauma—a direct blow, fall or “whiplash”; spinal column compression; nerve lesions; localized infections or inflammation; even gout. Usually, the nerves are inflamed and sensitive because they are trapped within the muscles. Muscle spasms and pain are often associated with nerve entrapment, which causes localized pain, spasm, and muscle cramping.

Symptoms: *Occipital neuralgia* often radiates to the back, front and side of the head as well as behind the eyes. These headaches often follow an arching pattern across the side of the head, frequently starting in the upper neck or base of the skull. It can be one-sided, or hemispherical, or on both sides. Often, stress plays a role in triggering *occipital neuralgia*. Although *occipital neuralgia* can strike at almost any time in life, these headaches are almost always associated with a major fall, whiplash, or blunt trauma to the neck.

Treatment: Treatment options can include chiropractic care, acupuncture, physical therapy, and massage therapy. The chiropractor will diagnose your condition and determine what type of treatments and modalities are appropriate for you.