



**GOVERNMENT OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES**

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PRESS RELEASE

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**VI Department of Health Joins in the Observance of
National Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) Awareness Month**

US Virgin Islands — The VI Department of Health (VIDOH) joins in the October observance of National Trigeminal Neuralgia Awareness Month and more specifically October 7th, National Trigeminal Neuralgia Day.

Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN), also known as *tic douloureux* or *fothergill's disease* is a rare neurological disorder of the trigeminal nerves in the face which result in severe, chronic pain. The disorder is frequently caused when the trigeminal nerve leading from the brain to the face becomes injured or compressed due by an artery, vein or tumor resulting in the nerve's normal function. This can happen due to surgical injuries, strokes, or physical trauma causing damage to the covering that protects the trigeminal nerve. Infrequently Trigeminal neuralgia can also result from Multiple Sclerosis, Herpes zoster (shingles) or Lupus. Approximately 10,000 – 15,000 new cases are diagnosed annually in the U.S.

TN symptoms include severe or shooting facial pain (whether chronic or episodic), burning sensations, pain on one side of the face, ear pain, nausea, fatigue, and sensitivity to light. Patients suffering with TN usually experience severe pain, on one side of the face. The pain can often be mistaken for migraines because the symptoms are similar and include sensitivity to light and nausea. For unknown reasons more women, especially those over the age of 50, experience TN than men. Pain is often triggered by routine daily living activities like touching or washing the face, shaving, putting on cosmetics, eating, drinking, brushing teeth, talking, smiling, or even mild breezes.

Continued on page 2

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Page 2

In addition to severe pain, TN can have a psychological impact on the individual oftentimes resulting in depression and anxiety, and extreme fear of triggering a painful episode due to brushing teeth or eating. This can lead to moderate weight loss and poor oral hygiene.

Without medical intervention the condition can last a lifetime. Recommended treatments for T N include the use of prescription medications or corrective surgery to eliminate pressure on the nerve. Medications include pills or injections to reduce pain or destroy the nerve. Surgical procedures can also be used in severe cases for treatment.

Anyone that experiences a new and severe facial pain that does not respond to over-the-counter pain relievers should visit a healthcare provider or neurologist. Confirmation testing for Trigeminal Neuralgia can be done through laboratory testing and radiological imaging.

“Although TN is a rare neurological illness,” states Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, “There are several confirmed cases in our Territory. It is my hope that by participating in the observance of National Trigeminal Neuralgia Awareness Month the public will gain a better understanding of the plight of those afflicted with the condition.”

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