Season's change can bring on cluster headaches

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An expert's advice on how to deal with the painful condition

(HealthDay)—Nearly 1 million Americans face the threat of cluster headaches since summer officially arrived, an expert says.

That's because people's biological rhythms are linked with the Earth's rotation, according to Dr. Brian Grosberg, director of the Montefiore Headache Center in New York City.

Cluster headaches occur close together and often on the same day. On average, they last 30 minutes to three hours. About 80 percent of people with cluster headaches experience them for 12 weeks each year, often during seasonal changes.

"Cluster headache, also known as 'suicide headache,' is a neurological disorder characterized by severe pain behind or around one's eye," Grosberg said in a Montefiore news release. "It is one of the most painful conditions a person can experience, even more incapacitating than a migraine."

He offered the following advice for those who get cluster headaches:

- Don't drink alcohol or smoke during cluster headache periods.
- Taking the hormone melatonin can help regulate sleep-wake cycles and correct imbalances in the body that might be linked to the headaches.
- During a cluster headache, some people find relief by breathing 100 percent (pure) oxygen for 10 to 15 minutes.

- Talk to your doctor about prescription medicines that might help relieve the pain.
- It's also a good idea to talk to a headache specialist about different remedies.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about cluster headache.

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