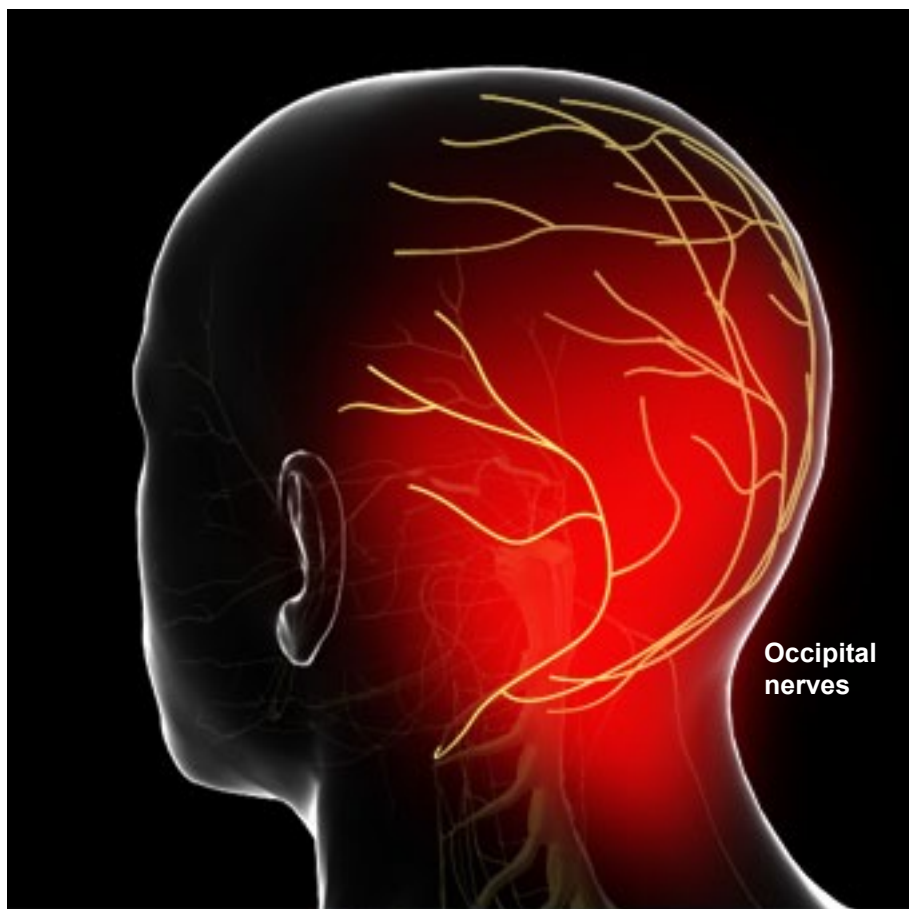


Occipital Neuralgia (Arnold's Neuralgia)



Overview

This condition is a distinct type of headache caused by irritation or injury of the occipital nerves. These nerves travel from the base of the skull through the scalp. This condition can result in severe pain and muscle spasms.

Causes

Occipital neuralgia can be caused by direct trauma to the back of the head or neck. It can be caused by overly tight muscles in the neck, or by compression of the nerve roots. It can develop as a result of osteoarthritis. A localized infection or tissue inflammation, or a tumor or lesion can cause occipital neuralgia. It can be caused by conditions such as gout or diabetes. And finally, it can develop from keeping the head in a downward and forward position for lengthy periods.

Symptoms

Symptoms of occipital neuralgia include piercing, throbbing, or electric-shock-like pain. This pain begins in the upper neck and then spreads upward to the back of the head and behind the ears. It usually affects only one side of the head, but it can be felt on both sides. In some cases the scalp becomes hypersensitive. Activities such as brushing or shampooing the hair or lying on a pillow can be painful. The person may experience muscle spasms in the neck and a reduced ability to flex or rotate the neck. The person may also experience extreme sensitivity to light, especially during a headache.

Treatment

Treatment options may include massage, physical therapy and medications designed to reduce inflammation. Options may also include nerve blocks and steroid injections. If those methods are not successful, surgery may be performed to decompress the painful nerve root. Another option is the implantation of a nerve stimulator to block painful occipital nerve signals.

