



# Paroxysmal Hemicrania

## Overview

Population-based data on the prevalence of paroxysmal hemicrania is sparse and has been cited as 0.05% in the 18-65-year age group.

Total published cases remain less than 200.

There is a possibility that women are affected slightly more often than men

Mean age of onset is between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> decades

## What are the symptoms?

This consists of relatively short lived attacks of pain in one side of the head

Attack duration ranges between 2-30 minutes and frequency of attacks is reported up to 50 a day. The mean lies between seven and 13 attacks per day.

A greater proportion present with chronic paroxysmal hemicrania. The disorder has an absolute response to indomethacin.

The attacks are shorter and more frequent than in cluster headaches.

### **Treatment**

By definition paroxysmal hemicrania is an indomethacin-responsive disorder.

Most people show a rapid response to indomethacin though sometimes it can take up to a week to demonstrate a response to an effective dose.

Dose requirements can change over time and some people may go into remission.

Therefore, once symptoms are well controlled for a period of time a gradual dose reduction should be tried to maintain the lowest effective dose or, if there is no recurrence on each dose reduction, withdrawal during remission periods.

It is important to be aware that gastrointestinal side effects with indomethacin are common and may preclude use of the drug. A stomach protecting drug (proton-pump blocker or H2-antagonist may be used)