

E-Pearl of the Week

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The neck-tongue syndrome

This rare syndrome is characterized by unilateral pain in the upper neck or occiput with ipsilateral tongue numbness. These symptoms may be triggered by axial rotation of the head. Afferent proprioceptive fibers from the tongue normally travel with the lingual nerve via the hypoglossal nerve to the ventral ramus of the C2 spinal nerve. It is believed that mechanical injury to the C2 ventral ramus can thus cause a referred sensory disturbance of the tongue. In the evaluation of these patients, upper cervical spine, especially atlantoaxial, instability should be considered, along with muscle spasm.

Reference

Orrell RW, Marsden CD. The neck-tongue syndrome. *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1994;57:348-352.