

# medi•cabu•lary

## the language of healthcare explained

### What are lightning pains?

Lightning pains are brief and stabbing in nature. They occur in the extremities or face and are localized to one spot, not radiating longitudinally along a limb. The painful sensation feels like a sharp object is repetitively thrust into the limb. Lasting only seconds, pains may shift from place to place. Weather changes may precipitate attacks.

Inflammatory, infectious, or hereditary involvement of the dorsal roots of the spinal and trigeminal nerves causes the pain. In previous centuries, the most common cause was tabes dorsalis, from tertiary syphilis. With the discovery of penicillin, this condition is now rarely encountered.



Gabapentin, carbamazepine, and anti-depressants may provide relief.

**Robert F. Saul, MD**  
Carilion Clinic Neurology

### What is the difference between vegetarian and vegan?

Vegetarian is a word to describe someone who does not eat meat. A true vegetarian does not eat anything with a mother, a face or a liver. If someone eats fish as their only flesh they are called a pescovegetarian. A vegetarian who eats dairy is called a lacto-vegetarian and one who eats eggs is an ovo-vegetarian. A vegan eats no animal flesh and also no animal products, including eggs and dairy.



Studies show that these types of plant-based diets reduce your risks of heart disease and cancer.

**Jeanie Redick, CN, IHC**  
Eat For Life, Roanoke

### What is a medically induced coma?

Extreme trauma to the brain can induce a comatose state in a patient. A comatose patient will be unresponsive to painful, physical, or verbal stimulus. Trauma to the brain will bring about negative metabolic

changes within the brain itself. These negative changes can alter blood flow patterns to areas of the brain, cause brain swelling and ultimately can lead to death of brain tissue. Medically-induced coma can be used to protect at-risk areas of the brain by shutting down brain function, thus decreasing metabolic activity of the brain. This allows time for healing of the brain to occur and brain swelling to decrease. The state of medically-induced coma is achieved by using medications such as pentobarbital, phenobarbital, or propofol to basically place the brain under general anesthesia. The depth of a medically-induced coma can be monitored by measuring an electroencephalogram (EEG) which records the waves emitted by the brain. The medically-induced coma is reversible. Thus, once brain healing has occurred, the medications are stopped, the brain metabolism is felt to be restored, and the coma is reversed.



**Raymond V. Harron, DO**  
Jefferson Surgical Clinic  
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### How far away should a person be when watching television to ensure it does not cause damage to his or her vision?

Contrary to popular myth, sitting too close to a TV will not damage your eyes, but it may cause eyestrain and fatigue. Suggested optimum TV viewing distances to prevent strain and fatigue have changed with the advent of HDTV vs. analog. The rule-of-thumb with an analog TV is three to five times the TV screen width. For HDTVs, most manufacturers will list the ranges in the operating manual depending on the screen size purchased.



**Olivia Schaubach, OD**  
Eye Care & Surgery  
Roanoke

### How old and what weight should a child be when he or she no longer needs to use a car seat in a vehicle?

Children must remain in a booster seat until age 8. They also need to stay in a booster until they are 4ft 9" and they fit properly in the car, meaning the lap and shoulder belts fit them over the hips, across the chest and snug over the shoulder, not hitting them in the neck. The safest place to ride is in the backseat until they are 13! For more info: [www.roanokeva.gov/fire-ems](http://www.roanokeva.gov/fire-ems).



**Tiffany Bradbury**  
Roanoke Fire-EMS  
Roanoke

### How effective are over-the-counter teeth whitening options available today?

Some over the counter teeth whitening products are effective. Most of them provide little to no results. If a patient cannot afford the professional whitening, I recommend the Crest Whitening Strips. My patients usually need to buy two kits of the over the counter whitening strips to get the results they want. All whitening treatments require touch ups usually once a year which should be factored into your decision. In our office, touch up gel is only \$5 and it is used in your professional whitening trays. If you used OTC strips, then you will need to purchase an additional kit.



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just ask!