

## **BELL'S PALSY**

Bell's palsy is temporary weakness or paralysis of one side of the face.

It results from damage to the 7th (facial) cranial nerve, but complete recovery is seen in 80% of cases.

It has a sudden onset, but usually progress quickly, reaching maximum severity in 48 hours or less. Full recovery is expected within 2 weeks to 6 months in majority of cases.

### **Risk factors:**

- Diabetics, pregnant women & people with viral cold are more prone to suffer from Bell's palsy.
- Compromised immune system like in HIV or tuberculosis
- Viral infections like common cold , flu
- Bacterial infections
- Neurological disorders such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome, Multiple Sclerosis, Neurosarcoidosis or Brain Tumor
- Traumatic injury to the head or face

### **Symptoms:**

Facial nerve is responsible for carrying messages from the brain to the face. These signals help eyelid to close, allow mouth to smile or frown or facial expression. Facial nerves is responsible in production of tears and taste. So, in Bell's palsy, these messages are not sent from the affected side thus following symptoms develop like:

- Drooping or weakness of the face which makes face look distorted
- Loss of facial expression
- Difficulty in eating or drinking resulting in food spillage
- Difficulty in talking or slurred speech which is difficult to understand
- Total or partial loss of taste
- Ear pain
- Sensitivity to sound
- Inability to close your eye

### **Diagnosis:**

When you approach a doctor with your complaints, he will take a detailed medical history and perform a thorough examination to eliminate other possible causes of your symptoms.

Bell's palsy mostly affects only the face, so if a person has weakness or symptoms in other parts of the body, then further tests like CT scan or MRI are advised to rule out infection, tumor, or bone fracture. At times electromyography (EMG), to check nerve signals reaching muscles.

Laboratory tests can help the physician determine the underlying cause like diabetes or viral infections.

### **Treatment:**

The treatment of Bell's palsy is controversial. In some cases disease is self limiting. Anti-inflammatory corticosteroid is the choice of drugs in maximum cases till full recovery is observed. This period may range from one week to couple of months.

- For eye protection artificial tears are used every 2 hours to keep the eye moist.
- Sunglasses for protection from injury, it also reduces dryness by decreasing exposure to wind.
- During sleep, eyelid is artificially taped to reduce dryness and injury.