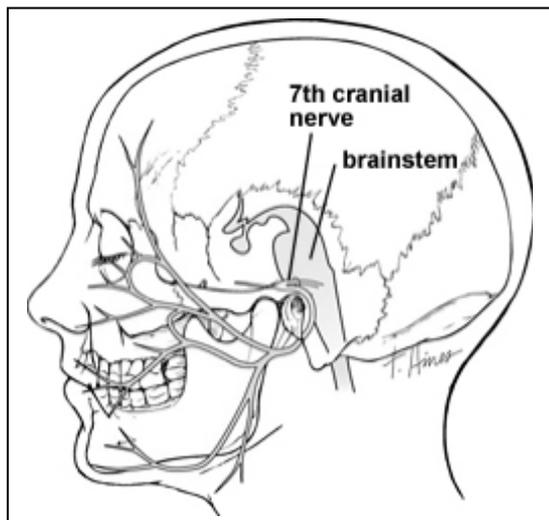


# Bell's Palsy



Bell's Palsy is a condition in which the movement on one side of the face becomes weak because of a facial nerve (7<sup>th</sup> nerve) paralysis. It occurs because the nerve that controls facial muscles is swollen or inflamed. It is a relatively common condition with an abrupt onset (usually within two days). Often there is pain around the ear on that side. Bell's palsy is not dangerous, but because the eye does not close properly it may need to be protected and moistened with artificial tears. About 10% will have a second episode of Bell's palsy in their

lifetime, often on the other side.

Treatment with steroids (prednisolone) may speed recovery if used within the first 48 to 72 hours of onset. Recovery is variable but usually occurs within 6 weeks with full recovery taking 3-6 months. Recovery is generally excellent- over 98% recover from partial weakness although less (80%) will make a full recovery if paralysis is complete.

## WHAT TESTS ARE NECESSARY

Testing may be necessary to rule out an uncommon cause of facial nerve palsy including *trauma* (damage caused by an accident), ear infections or *tumors* (lumps). Most of the time no cause is found and the palsy is thought to be viral in nature. Dr Iseli will carefully check your ear, feel for lumps and examine other nerves. Testing often includes a hearing test (audiogram) and scans (MRI or CT). With complete paralysis, nerve testing may help estimate the chances of a full recovery.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If given prednisolone, take as instructed and read the information sheet carefully.
- Use moisturizing eye drops (lacrilube) frequently during the day and ointment at night
- Protect your eye at night using a moisture chamber or careful taping.
- Use facial massage and exercises including smiling, closing your eyes and raising your eyebrows 4 times/ day for 5 minutes at a time.
- Perform your normal activities and obtain your normal rest.

## SEE DR ISELI OR YOUR GP IF:

- There is pain, redness or *irritation* (inflammation) in the eye.
- An oral temperature above 38.5° C develops.
- You notice a lump on your face or in your neck.
- You have drainage or worsening pain in your ear.
- Other nerves seem to be affected, causing problems with vision, sensation of the face, hearing, and swallowing or tongue movement.



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