

# Bell's Palsy

Bell's palsy happens when there is inflammation that causes damage to a nerve that feeds one side of the face. No one knows for sure what causes it, but some experts believe that it is the result of an infection. As a result of this nerve damage, people may experience:

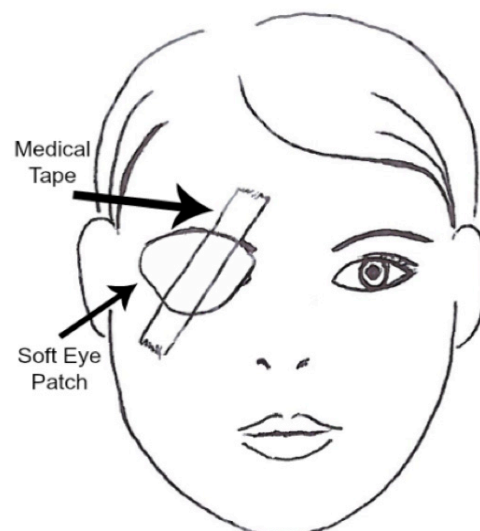
- + Sudden weakness or paralysis on one side of your face that causes it to droop. This is the main symptom. It may make it hard for you to close your eye on that side of your face.
- + Drooling.
- + Eye problems, such as excessive tearing or a dry eye.
- + Loss of ability to taste.
- + Pain in or behind your ear.
- + Numbness in the affected side of your face.
- + Increased sensitivity to sound.

Fortunately, for most people Bell's Palsy heals within three to six months. The younger you are, the more likely it is that the Bell's palsy will heal completely. However, in some cases the symptoms do not completely resolve.

## HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

- + If you have been prescribed an anti-viral medication and a steroid, fill the prescription as soon as possible (preferably on your way home from the ER). The sooner you start to take your medications, the more likely your symptoms are to fully go away.

- + Some people with Bell's palsy are unable to close their eye completely on the affected side of the face. This puts the eye at risk for becoming dry, which can cause surface damage on the eye. To prevent your eye from drying out, use artificial tears (which you can buy from the drug store) during the day time and artificial tear ointment at night.
- + You can also buy soft eye pads that can help to keep your eye closed and moist during the night. After putting some artificial tear ointment in the lower lid of the affected eye, close your eyelid fully with your fingers and place the eye pad over the closed eye. Use one piece of medical tape to tape the pad onto your face, placing one end of the tape on your forehead and the other end on your cheek, on the diagonal (see diagram).



## Bell's Palsy - Continued

- + During the daytime keep your eyes protected by wearing protective eyewear such as sunglasses (preferably large ones), to shield your eye from any foreign bodies (because you can't blink fully like you usually would if something came at your eye).
- + Mouth care. If you have no feeling and little saliva on one side of your tongue, food may get stuck there, leading to gum disease or tooth decay. Brush and floss your teeth often and well to help prevent these problems. To prevent swallowing problems, eat slowly and chew your food well. Eating soft, smooth foods, such as yogurt, may also help.

## WHEN TO GET HELP

### **Go to the nearest Emergency Department**

if you experience:

- + Fever and headache.
- + New neurological symptoms of arms or legs other side of face or balance.

## TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

## RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in 7-10 days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:

[www.bcemn.ca/clinical\\_resource/bells-palsy/](http://www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/bells-palsy/)

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[bcemn.ca](http://bcemn.ca)

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

