

## Battle with Bell's Palsy

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### Editorial

Bell's palsy, also known as facial paralysis that results in numbness of one side of the face and it is sometimes mistaken for a stroke by many individuals. A severe continuous pain around the jaw and behind the ear of the affected side for at least 2-3 days is the very first sign of the disease. No regular pain killers will work as the severity of the pain will be very high. Gradually few other symptoms will be experienced, such as increase in sensitivity to sound, excessive dryness of the eye, headache and loss of taste. Mild weakness to total paralysis on one side of the face just occurs within 3-4 days. It affects only one side of the face but in rare cases it affects both sides of the face.

Bell's palsy results from the damage of the seventh cranial nerve (CN VII), that controls the facial muscles, saliva glands, tear glands, and the small bone in the middle of the ear, that leads to one-sided smile, inability to close the eye on the affected side of the face, loss of feeling in the face, drooling, drooping of the mouth and excessive tearing in the eye.

Bell's palsy strikes men as well as women equally and is not age-specific. Sometimes Bell's palsy is idiopathic and happens for no reason. But swelling and inflammation of the CN VII has

seen in individuals with Bell's palsy. It is sometimes associated with Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Trauma, infection especially Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) and rarely Lyme disease. It mostly occurs in pregnant women and people with influenza.

Seeking immediate medical help will help the Bell's palsy patient to recover within 3 weeks to 6 months. The neurologist suggest eye drops in order to prevent temporary/permanent vision loss and suggest steroid medication such as Prednisolone to reduce pain and antiviral medication such as Acyclovir, and facial exercises to stimulate the facial nerve. Electrical stimulation, Acupuncture will also give positive results in treating Bell's palsy. Along with these the diet must include B12, B6, Vitamin C and the mineral zinc for fast recovery.

Though Bell's palsy is relatively rare but it affects the individual physically as one could not able to eat/chew food as food drops down from the mouth, could not able to pronounce B and P properly, and could not hold water in mouth. It affects the psychological condition of the individual as it causes anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Bell's palsy symptoms will lasts for lifetime for very few people. Rarely does it recur. But the majority of people with Bell's palsy recover full facial strength and expression with immediate medical help, good diet, proper exercise and positive attitude.