



Bell's Palsy

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information. Please talk with your child's doctor or pediatric audiologist to get more specific information. Call **813-262-1330** to schedule an appointment.

What is Bell's palsy?

- A condition that causes the facial nerve not to work resulting in paralysis (sagging, frozen expressions, frowns, and droopiness) and distortions of the face
- It is the most common facial nerve disorder in both men and women across a wide range of ages

What are the risk factors for Bell's palsy?

- 15-45 year age group
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Upper respiratory ailments

What are the possible symptoms of Bell's palsy?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Mild to severe facial paralysis or weakness
- Difficulty to smile or make facial expressions
- Hard time eating or drinking
- Facial numbness and drooling
- Pain around the ears and loss of the sense of taste
- Eyelids may not fully close and face may feel heavy

What causes Bell's palsy?

Bell's palsy is not fully understood. Researchers believe it occurs when the facial nerve becomes damaged or squeezed or swollen by inflammation. Some studies indicate that it may be related to a virus or a response by the body's immune system

How is Bell's palsy diagnosed?

An ENT will rule out other, non-Bell's Palsy conditions that may be causing the facial paralysis or other symptoms. They will review symptoms and medical history to decide if conditions or disorders might be causing the paralysis

Does Bell's palsy get better or worse over time?

- Most children affected by Bell's Palsy will recover over a period of time
- Studies show completely restored function in 70% of Bell's Palsy patients with complete paralysis within 6 months and as high as 94% of patient with partial paralysis
- There are few patients who may have some degree of long-lasting paralysis
- It's important to follow-up and complete testing as directed by your doctor

What treatment options are available for Bell's palsy?

Several treatment options are available to Bell's palsy patients:

- Watching and waiting – some patient's recover over time
- Prescribed oral steroids
- Electronic nerve stimulation – stimulates the facial nerve for muscle movement
- Electroneurography – measures the nerve
- Hyperbaric therapy – administers high levels of oxygen

- Acupuncture

What else can be done?

If the condition does not improve over time there are some procedures that can help reduce the effects:

- Specialized help with closing the eyelids
- Follow up with the doctor , should the symptoms not get better within three months or if symptoms worsen
- Join an online support discussion forums

Adapted from the American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery Journal