

BELLS PALSY

WHAT IS IT?



Bell's Palsy is facial paralysis

normally affecting one side of the face and is the result of damage to the 7th cranial nerve.

In most cases (approx 80%) the condition recedes after 3 months though for a proportion of sufferers the symptoms can continue for longer and in extreme cases indefinitely. Most patients suspect they have suffered a stroke when first faced by it's effect and a visit to the doctor helps alleviate their fears.

Bell's palsy has numerous potential causes.

It is presently thought that most cases arise from herpes simplex virus infections (the same one that gives you cold sores in your mouth) and individuals at increased risk include pregnant women, diabetics, those who have had recent episodes of influenza or respiratory infection, and those with family history of the disease. In 75% of patients, no cause for Bell's Palsy is established and it is speculated that a viral infection is the cause of Bell's Palsy in this situation. The paralysis can happen suddenly and worsens over 2-5 days affecting people of all ages and gender.



Eye care is vital for Bell's Palsy sufferers. The inability to close your eye may result in damage if the eye dries out. Use eye drops to artificially lubricate your eye and if necessary wear an eye patch to give added protection, especially at night. Your doctor may prescribe a course of steroids for Bell's Palsy which have shown to be effective in more extreme cases. It is also important to rest as much as possible as you will undoubtedly feel tired and normal painkillers can be used if you are suffering facial or head pain.



BELL'S PALSY
ASSOCIATION

If you have internet access, you can visit our website at

www.BellsPalsy.org.uk

for further details on symptoms, treatment and research.