

Bell's Palsy

Bell's Palsy is an unexplained condition characterized by temporary weakness or paralysis of the facial muscles, often affecting one side of the face. This weakness results in a droopy appearance, a one-sided smile, and discomfort or pain. Patients with Bell's Palsy typically recover in less than six months, however, the symptoms may remain in rare cases.

History

- The history of Bell's Palsy traces back to the early 19th century when Sir Charles Bell, a Scottish surgeon and neurophysicist, played a key role in the condition's discovery
- In 1821, Bell presented numerous cases of facial paralysis, resulting from various causes: trauma, infection, unknown factors, etc.
 - At first, the term "Bell's Palsy" encompassed facial palsy of any origin
- As medical knowledge advanced, the term "Bell's Palsy" became more refined and nuanced



Diagnosis

- Electromyography (EMG): confirms nerve damage and assesses severity
- Imaging scans: MRI and CT scans; used to rule out other sources of facial nerve pressure (tumors or skull fractures)
- Blood tests: rule out infections and other diseases



References

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Causes

- Viral infections (herpes simplex, herpes zoster, Epstein-Barr, cytomegalovirus, adenovirus, rubella, mumps, influenza B, coxsackievirus, COVID-19)
- Inflammation and compression of the seventh cranial nerve:
 - This nerve carries signals that control facial movements and expressions
 - Inflammation of this nerve affects muscle movement
 - The viral infections listed above may trigger the inflammation of the seventh cranial nerve
- Risk factors include: Diabetes, pregnancy, stress, injury, high blood pressure

Treatment

Steroids

- Prednisone is commonly prescribed
- 14% greater recovery probability if started within three days

Antivirals

- Limited evidence of direct effectiveness
- Combined with steroids to provide benefit
- Commonly prescribed due to theoretical links with herpes virus

Eye Protection

- Essential when unable to close eyes completely
- Tear-like eye drops, ointments, patches, or tape for protection during sleep

Physiotherapy

- Maintains muscle tone and stimulates facial nerve
- Early implementation helps prevent permanent contractures
- Heat application can reduce pain

Surgery

- Treatment option for facial nerve palsy that has not recovered
- Smile surgery may restore facial movement
- Many risks to surgery