



Bell's palsy

You came to the emergency department with weakness on one side of your face. The doctor examined you and thinks this is Bell's palsy, not a stroke. This sheet explains what to expect and how to protect your eye.

What is it?

Bell's palsy is sudden weakness of the muscles on one side of the face. It happens when the nerve that moves those muscles becomes swollen, often after a virus. Your eyelid may not close fully, and eating or drinking may feel strange. Most people start to improve within a few weeks and recover fully within a few months.

Looking after yourself at home

- Protect your eye: if it does not close fully, use eye drops by day and eye ointment at night.
- Tape the eyelid closed gently at night, or wear an eye patch, as shown by your doctor.
- Wear glasses or sunglasses outside to keep dust and wind out of the eye.
- Eat soft food, chew on the other side, and check for food left in your cheek.
- Gently massage your face and practise facial movements in a mirror once you can.

Medicines

- Steroid tablets started in the first few days can help the nerve recover. Take the full course as prescribed.
- Use lubricating eye drops and ointment often. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 1 week.
- See your doctor again if there is no improvement at all after 3 weeks.
- See an eye doctor soon if your eye becomes red, painful, or your vision is blurred.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Weakness or numbness in an arm or leg
- Slurred speech, confusion, or trouble understanding words
- A painful, red eye or a change in your vision
- A severe headache, dizziness, or trouble walking
- Double vision, or trouble swallowing or choking on drinks
- Weakness that spreads to both sides of your face



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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