



Dwayne B. Baharozian, MD  
*Eye Physician and Surgeon*  
Board Certified by American Board of Ophthalmology

*Glaucoma*  
*Cataracts*  
*Diabetic Eye Disease*  
*Laser Surgery*

## **Bell's Palsy**

Bell's palsy is a nerve problem that affects the muscles of your face. It causes weakness or partial paralysis of the muscles on one side of your face. With Bell's palsy, your eyelid may not close properly and your smile may seem uneven. Symptoms can appear suddenly. You may notice that you cannot smile on one side of your face. You may have trouble speaking clearly, and you may lose feeling in your face. You may have some facial pain just before or as it becomes weakened or partially paralyzed. You might not be able to taste food as well as you could before. Also, you could have hearing problems, such as having things sound distorted or unusual. **Your eyes may become dry and you may have blurry vision.** One eye may not close completely, and it may feel irritated. **Lubricating eye drops or ointments**, (Refresh®, TheraTears®, Systane®) along with **taping the eyelid shut** at bedtime can help improve ocular comfort and protect the health of the ocular surface.

### **What causes Bell's palsy?**

Generally, it is not known what causes Bell's palsy. However, doctors believe it may be due to one or more of these problems:

- problems in your body's immune system (how it fights disease)
- reduced blood flow to a nerve that goes to your face (the 7th cranial nerve)
- infection from a virus, causing swelling of the facial nerves

**Tell your primary care doctor or eye doctor if any of your symptoms get worse.** If you have symptoms on both sides of your face, you may have something other than Bell's palsy. If your symptoms do not improve in a few weeks, your doctor may recommend an MRI. An MRI is a scan that provides images of tissue inside the body.

### **How long do Bell's palsy symptoms last?**

For about 8 out of 10 people, symptoms of Bell's palsy start to improve in about 3 weeks. Symptoms should be nearly gone in about 2–3 months. Some symptoms may remain, such as a small amount of facial paralysis or reduced movement on one side of your face. For about 2 out of 10 people, Bell's palsy symptoms never go away.

There is no specific treatment for Bell's palsy. In most cases, it goes away on its own in a few weeks. However, your eye doctor can help manage the symptoms affecting your eye. Eye drops or other lubricants provide relief if you cannot fully shut your eye.

In some cases, corticosteroids, antiviral drugs or other medicine may be prescribed to help you heal from Bell's palsy.

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