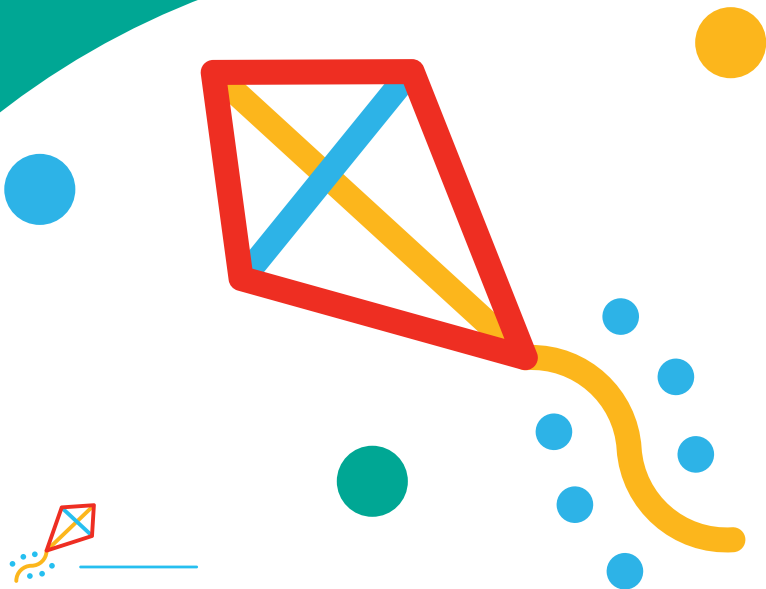


Bell's Palsy

Information for parents,
carers and children



leeds children's
hospital

caring about children

What is Bell's palsy?

Bell's palsy is temporary weakness or lack of movement affecting one side of the face due to a dysfunction of the facial nerve. Bell's palsy is an idiopathic condition, meaning that we don't know what causes it.

What are the symptoms of Bell's palsy?

Bell's palsy comes on suddenly over 72 hours or less.

You/your child may have:

- Drooping of the face on one side
- Altered sense of taste
- Sensitivity to loud noise
- Dry eye on the affected side, inability to close the eye properly
- Difficulty eating and speaking due to weakness of the tongue, lips and cheek
- Pain around the ear

How is Bell's palsy diagnosed?

Bell's palsy is a diagnosis of exclusion, so it is made from the history and examination, and by ruling out other possible causes. This may include some blood tests.

How is Bell's palsy treated?

Eye care - the affected eye must be protected from damage. Artificial tears should be applied six times a day to ensure that the cornea is kept moist and protected. A thicker ointment should be applied at night. If you/your child is unable to close the eye fully, it should be taped closed for all periods of sleep.

Mouth care - food may become lodged around the teeth and gums on the affected side so try to clean this area well and remove debris after eating.

Steroids - prednisolone may be prescribed if it can be started within 72 hours of the symptoms appearing.

Exercises can be useful to tone the facial muscles as movement returns:

- Gently raise your eyebrows – you can help the movement with your fingers
- Wrinkle your nose
- Try and flare your nostrils
- Lift one corner of the mouth and then the other
- Smile without showing your teeth, then smile with showing your teeth
- Bring your eyebrows together in a frown

Although no certain cause has been established, people newly diagnosed with Bell's palsy should understand that they are unwell. It is important to get plenty of rest, even if they have no other symptoms, and to maintain a healthy diet.

What happens next?

You will receive a phonecall from the ear, nose and throat (ENT) team regarding follow up. If the symptoms have resolved prior to this appointment, please ring to cancel your appointment on **0113 392 6304**.

Around 95% of children with Bell's palsy make full recovery within 12 months, usually in the first six weeks.

You'll usually only get Bell's palsy once, but it can sometimes come back. This is more likely if you have a family history of the condition.

More information can be found at www.facialpalsy.org.uk



What did you think of your care?

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