

## **Bell's Palsy**

Bell's Palsy is a sudden weakness or paralysis of the facial muscles. In most cases it affects only one side of the face. It is caused by inflammation or damage to the facial nerve. Most cases are thought to be the result of a viral infection. Bell's Palsy is a temporary condition.

Symptoms include mild weakness to total paralysis of the facial muscles on one side of the face, causing drooping of that side of the face, mouth and eye. Facial expressions become difficult such as smiling or closing eyes. Onset can be rapid, occurring within hours to several days.

In some cases, there can be pain around the jaw or ear on the affected side, also headache or increased sensitivity on the affected side. There may be changes to taste, as well as to the amount of tears and saliva you produce.

Bell's Palsy occurs in any person of any age. It is most commonly in pregnant woman in their last trimester or one week after birth and people with diabetes or during a respiratory infection such as a cold or flu.

Symptoms start to improve within a few weeks with complete recovery in about 6 months. A small number of people have symptoms for life.

In rare cases irreversible damage occurs to your facial nerve or involuntary muscle contraction may cause issues.

Most instances Bell's Palsy is handled by your GP but in some cases, you may be referred to a Neurologist for further investigations.

Bells Palsy can mimic other conditions, so a referral to Dr Pascoe may be required to exclude other conditions. Further investigation may include MRI and EMG (muscle testing).