Bell's Palsy

You have Bell's palsy. This is a condition in which one side of the face becomes temporarily weak or paralyzed. Most of the time no cause is found. A viral infection of the facial nerve is the most commonly suspected cause. The condition almost always clears up in a few weeks to months. However, in a small number of people, the weakness can be permanent. Sometimes steroid medicines and antiviral medicines are prescribed to improve recovery time. Blood and other tests are usually not needed, but they may be performed at your caregiver's discretion, to rule out other causes.

Careful follow up is important, to be sure the facial nerve is recovering. Because facial weakness can make it hard to blink, it is important to prevent drying of the eye. Artificial tears are often prescribed to keep the eye lubricated. Glasses or an eye patch should be worn to protect the eye, if you cannot close your eye completely. If the eye is not protected, permanent damage can be done to the cornea (*clear covering over your eye*). Sometimes facial massage and exercises help weakened muscles recover.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have increased weakness, earache, headache, or dizziness.
- You develop new problems or symptoms, or the area of weakness or paralysis extends beyond the face.
- You feel you are getting worse.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 01/09/2011
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