

Are you sure it's Bell's Palsy?



What is Bell's Palsy?

- An **acute, unilateral, LMN** (lower motor neuron) facial nerve palsy¹
- No other neurological signs; other causes of facial palsy **must** be ruled out²
- Facial palsy = weakness/paralysis of muscles of facial expression due to dysfunction of the facial nerve

When it's NOT Bell's Palsy

Signs of other causes of facial palsy include:
(not exhaustive)

- **Forehead sparing** -> UMN (upper motor neuron) involvement -> eg **stroke**³
- **Progressive/recurrent** weakness -> **tumour, MS**
- **Bilateral** weakness -> **GBS, sarcoid, lyme** disease
- **Rash/ear** pain -> **Ramsay Hunt**⁴
- **Hearing** loss/**parotid** mass -> **acoustic neuroma, parotid tumour**

There are more than 60 different causes of facial palsy



A diagnosis of exclusion

Misdiagnosing facial palsy as Bell's Palsy = missed stroke, tumour, infection

1. Holland NJ, Weiner GM. Recent developments in Bell's palsy. *BMJ*. 2004.

2. Baugh RF, Basura GJ, Ishii LE, et al. Clinical practice guideline: Bell's palsy. *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2013.

3. Gagyor I, Madhok V, Daly F, Somasundara D, Sullivan M. Antiviral treatment for Bell's palsy. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2015.

4. Gilden DH. Clinical practice. Bell's palsy. *N Engl J Med*. 2004.