

Bell's palsy is a non-progressive neurological disorder of one of the facial nerves (7th cranial nerve). This disorder is characterized by the sudden onset of facial paralysis that may be preceded by a slight fever, pain behind the ear on the affected side, a stiff neck, and weakness and/or stiffness on one side of the face. Paralysis results from decreased blood supply (ischemia) and/or compression of the 7th cranial nerve. The exact cause of Bell's palsy is not known. Viral (e.g., herpes zoster virus) and immune disorders are frequently implicated as a cause for this disorder. There may also be an inherited tendency toward developing Bell's palsy. The exact cause of Bell's palsy is not known. Viral and immune disorders are often implicated as a cause for this disorder. There may also be an inherited tendency toward developing Bell's palsy. Symptoms develop due to deficiency of blood supply and pressure on the 7th cranial nerve as a result of nerve swelling. A preliminary diagnosis may be made by the physician upon looking at the patient's face and noticing the difficulty the patient has in moving the facial muscles. Electromyography, a test that measures the electrical conductivity of the nerve, may be administered to confirm the diagnosis and to measure the extent of the nerve damage.