

News & Comments

A look at Justin Bieber's Ramsay Hunt syndrome

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In his video, the singer spoke out about a little-known and often misdiagnosed disorder. The condition can have life-altering effects if untreated.

Musician Justin Bieber, 28, announced earlier this month that he has a rare syndrome that causes partial facial paralysis. "I have this syndrome called Ramsay Hunt syndrome. As you can see this eye is not blinking. I can't smile on this side of my face. This nostril will not move," told the two-time Grammy award winner in an Instagram video. "I wish this wasn't the case but my body is telling me I've got to slow down."

Ramsay Hunt syndrome is caused by the varicella-zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. The remains dormant in some people's dorsal root ganglion of the spinal cord even after they recover from chickenpox. Later in a few people, it reactivates and causes disease. This reactivation can be spontaneous or due to triggers like an infection. Once reactivated, it forms shingles - a painful rash and blisters on the torso. But if this reactivation affects the facial nerve, (as in the case of Justin) it manifests as Ramsay Hunt syndrome. It usually causes paralysis of the facial nerve, leading to paralysis of the muscles of facial expression, making it difficult to smile or frown, blinking, slurred speech, and altered taste. If left untreated, it can damage the cornea of the eye.

Its treatment includes the use of antiviral drugs, steroids, and painkillers. The success of treatment and chances of recovery depends primarily upon how early the treatment is started. The 70% of the people recovered completely if given treatment in the first 3 days of the appearance of symptoms.

KEYWORDS

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