

Behind the Health Condition That Caused Justin Bieber's Facial Paralysis

An oculoplastic surgeon shares his thoughts.

By Olivia Wohlner, Editorial Assistant · Jun 13, 2022



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When Justin Bieber cancelled his upcoming concerts, fans were both disappointed and confused, but Bieber finally took to social media to explain the reasoning behind his inability to perform, and it's serious.

"I wanted to update you guys on what's been going on," says Bieber in a recent Instagram video. "Obviously, as you can probably see from my face, I have this syndrome Ramsay Hunt Syndrome, and it is from this virus that attacks the nerve in my ear and my facial nerves and has caused my face to have paralysis." Pointing to the right side of his face, he adds, "As you can see, this eye is not blinking, I can't smile on this side of my face, this nostril will not move, so there's full paralysis on this side of my face."

In a more recent Instagram story he adds another symptom he's been experiencing: "Been getting progressively harder to eat, which has been extremely frustrating, please pray for me," he writes, adding a crying emoji at the end.



Instagram: justinbieber

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"For those who are frustrated by my cancellations of the next shows, I'm just physically not capable of doing them. This is pretty serious as you can see," he continues in his original video. "I wish this wasn't the case, but obviously my body's telling me I have to slow down and I hope you guys understand. I'll be using this time to just rest and relax and get back to 100 percent so that I can do what I was born to do."

To understand more about the syndrome, we reached out to Woodbury, NY oculoplastic surgeon **Q David Schlessinger, MD**. "Ramsay Hunt is a disease that is caused by the Herpes Zoster Virus (Chicken pox virus)," he says. "You need to have been exposed to the virus at a younger age. The virus never leaves the body but instead lives dormant in the nerve. During times of stress, or if your immune system is slightly weakened, the virus reactivates and causes inflammation of the nerve." He adds that this is very similar to Bell's Palsy. "The difference between Bell's Palsy and Ramsay Hunt is that Ramsay Hunt involves the nerve to the ear, so there can be pain and hearing loss in the ear in addition to vesicles inside the ear."

In regard to treatment, Dr. Schlessinger says it involves the use of anti-viral medication and possibly steroids. "Although the condition can clear on it's own, some people can have permanent facial weakness and hearing loss. Sometimes the condition can weaken the muscles that close the eyelids. When this happens, some patients can get dry and tearing eye. It can also affect speech and chewing."