

**DEFINITION**

1. **Hemifacial spasm** consists of frequent unilateral clonic facial contractions.

**CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS**

2. The condition usually begins as fine twitching of one orbicularis oculi, spreading very slowly over a long period of time to involve the lower facial muscles of the ipsilateral side. Severe cases end up with almost continuous contraction of one half of the face, when it is associated with slight weakness and atrophy of the affected muscles and also loss of taste over the anterior 2/3 of the tongue.
3. Infrequently the condition becomes bilateral, with the original side remaining worse.
4. The condition is to be distinguished from tic (in which spasms are partly voluntary, often bilateral and usually in children or young adults), blepharospasm (prolonged bilateral spasm of the orbicularis oculi, usually in elderly people) and senile chorea (bilateral).
5. The spasms are accentuated by emotional stress.

**AETIOLOGY**

6. The condition is much commoner in women than men, and is rare before middle life.
7. The condition is due to irritation of the facial nerve somewhere along its course. This may be due to -
  - 7.1. idiopathic fibrosis
  - 7.2. incomplete recovery from Bell's palsy
  - 7.3. compression by:-
    - 7.3.1. an aberrant artery in the posterior cranial fossa shortly after its emergence from the brainstem
    - 7.3.2. a tumour (eg angioma) in the cerebello-pontine angle
    - 7.3.3. Paget's disease of bone
    - 7.3.4. a compressive lesion of the geniculate ganglion.

**CONCLUSION**

8. **Hemifacial spasm** is a condition in which there are spasmodic contractions of the facial muscles resulting from a lesion in the facial nerve.

## REFERENCES

Walton Sir John. Brain's Diseases of the Nervous System. 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1985. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p116.

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