

Information for Patients

Facial Palsy

Physiotherapy Service

What is Facial Palsy?

Facial Palsy is a condition, characterised by weakness of the facial muscles, mainly resulting from temporary or permanent damage to the facial nerve, which usually affects one side of the face. Recovery can vary, depending on the degree of nerve injury.

What causes it?

In the majority of cases the cause is thought to be viral, resulting in inflammation of the nerve as it exits the skull in its bony canal. Individuals at increased risk include pregnant women, diabetics, and those with a family history of the condition. Other factors which have been implicated include stress, trauma and recent illnesses.

Symptoms may include:

- Drooping mouth
- Dribbling
- Inability to close the eye
- Loss of taste
- Facial muscle weakness
- Increased sensitivity to sounds (hyperacusis)
- Difficulty eating/drinking
- Slurred speech
- Neck and/or ear pain

Treatment

A course of corticosteroids and/or anti-viral drugs is frequently prescribed in the early stages, along with eye drops. Physiotherapy may include advice/education, massage, facial exercises.

Complications

These may include:

- Eye infections
- Prolonged loss of taste
- Prolonged facial spasm
- If the facial nerve does not recover completely then abnormal or unwanted facial movements may occur.

General Advice

Eye care

It is important that the eye does not dry out as this may lead to infections. Using eye drops to artificially lubricate the eye will help. For added protection the eye lid may be taped shut at night. If you suspect you have an infection, please consult your doctor. Using sunglasses whilst outdoors helps to prevent dust entering the eye and exposure to the sun/wind.

Try to blink your eye manually as often as possible. This will not only keep your eye moist and healthy but will also stop your eyelid from tightening, preventing future problems.

Oral Hygiene

- Use mouthwashes regularly
- Practice sucking drinks through a straw
- Take small bites of food or eat semi-solid food
- If you suffer from a dry mouth, please consult your GP or pharmacist

Massage

Massaging your face is important, especially in the early days. It helps to improve circulation to the facial muscles, keeping your muscles healthy while the nerve recovers. It also helps to relax the muscles on the unaffected side which can become overactive, and helps to keep you "in touch ", with your face.

Concentrate on massaging the forehead, temples, cheek and chin, using firm pressure.

Your therapist will advise you of the correct technique. For further information visit [What is Facial Palsy? - Facial Palsy UK](#)

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg