Physiotherapy Department

Facial Palsy Advice

A Facial Palsy is the disturbance or paralysis of the muscles supplied by the seventh cranial nerve, also known as the Facial Nerve. The condition usually affects one side of the face. Sometimes the face recovers rapidly, however if it takes longer, some patients need specialist care.

Symptoms may include changes to communication, facial expression, speech, the ease of eating and drinking and eye and mouth dryness / complications.

Facial paralysis is almost always caused by:

- Damage or swelling of the facial nerve, which carries signals from the brain to the muscles of the face.
- Damage to the area of the brain that sends signals to the muscles of the face.

Causes for damage and swelling of the facial nerve include: Bells Palsy, mostly commonly occurring, caused by the herpes virus, Ramsey Hunt, caused by the shingles virus, trauma, surgery, tumours, neurological and auto-immune disorders.

If the facial palsy is due to a virus, take plenty of rest when you feel tired. The sooner the body fights off the virus, the quicker things can start to recover.

Self Help

Is Your Eye At Risk?

The ability of the eyelid to fully close the eye and the return of an effective blink are essential protective mechanisms for the eye.
If you have a facial weakness, these may be ineffective.

Until these are achieved, it is essential that you take care of your eye.

The surface of the eye is increasingly exposed to irritants such as dust, wind, hair and clothing. In the early stages of a facial palsy, your eye may feel dry, as you produce fewer tears. This, combined with a reduction or loss of blink (blinking lubricates, cleans and protects your eye) may result in increasing irritation. Excessive watering should also be recognised as a sign of eye irritation.

compassionate care

The consequences of inadequate eye care can have a very significant effect on your final recovery, and may result in the following:

- Excessive watering of the eye
- Soreness
- Eye infections/conjunctivitis
- Corneal ulcers, which are not only painful, but can result in permanent loss of sight
- Excessive tightness in the cheek, as it attempts to assist eye closure. This can add to a complication, during your recovery, called synkinesis. This results in a very tight cheek and a small looking eye.

Attention to eye care **MUST** continue until the eye shuts and blinks properly. Inadequate eye care puts your sight at risk.

If the eye feels sore or becomes red, then seek professional advice as soon as possible.

Eye Care Advice

Ask someone to check that your eye is closing fully, including when you lay down. Often the eyeball may roll upwards, making you think the eye is closed (Bell's Phenomenon). It may feel closed to you, but people will still see the white of your eye.

Until you are sure you can close your eye fully, we recommend the following:

- Use eye drops regularly throughout the day e.g. visco tears, or any others recommended by a pharmacist, GP or consultant.
- Use thicker eye ointment at night e.g. lacrilube. Carefully close the eye and tape down to protect it throughout the night. If the eye drifts open whilst you sleep, it will become dry and specks of dust will irritate the eye. It will then feel sore, watery and can be red. Please see taping section for advice.
- Use glasses to protect the eye from wind and drafts. Opticians can fit side pieces for extra protection. Non-prescription glasses are also easily available.
- Sunglasses protect you from bright sunshine and can help if glare from indoor lights, televisions or computer screens pose a problem.
- Ski or swimming goggles are excellent to keep soap and shampoo out of your eyes.
- Avoid smoke filled rooms and dusty environments. Air conditioning can also be very drying to the eyes.
- Therapeutic taping, for short periods during the day, can help an irritable eye feel more comfortable. To tape the eye shut – look down, gently close the eye with your finger, and then place tape over the eye in a horizontal direction. Eye ointment can also help sticking the eye shut.
- If you find taping difficult, or need to use it frequently throughout the day, then try eye dressings.
- Never screw your face up tight to force eye closure as this will cause problems in your cheek.

Mouth Care Advice

Due to the weakness/paralysis of the facial muscles, eating and drinking may be difficult. Initially, a soft diet may be useful. Cut your food into smaller pieces so less chewing is required. At the end of every meal, cleans your cheeks of any remaining food. Use a straw to drink, if necessary. Place it in the centre of the mouth and complete the lip seal with finger pressure. Be extra careful of mouth hygiene, teeth cleaning and seek advice from a dentist where necessary.

Heat

The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. Use a warm water bottle, or microwavable wheat bag, following the instructions provided when you purchased it. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a few layers of towel. Leave in place for 15-20 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice packs, however, if you experience discomfort or burning sensation remove the item immediately. Do not apply heat or ice packs if you have poor skin sensation or poor circulation, if you are diabetic or over areas of infection.

Massage

Massaging the facial muscles will maintain their flexibility and help identify areas that feel loose or too tight. Massage helps preserve the idea of movement and keeps you in touch with your facial muscles. Massage assists in keeping a good blood supply to the muscles. This can also be achieved with finger tapping, brushing and stroking the muscle with an ice cube.

When areas of the face feel bruised on pressure, this is a sign that the nerve is growing back into the muscle.

Exercises

Exercises will promote symmetry with your face, both at rest and in activity. Your physiotherapist will go through specific exercises in detail as all movements must be balanced with the activity of the unaffected side. You should avoid working too hard and over tiring the muscles at this stage.

Photographs

It is worth taking photos of your face in different positions to document the progress of the facial muscles.. Your Physiotherapist may arrange for photographs to be taken by Medical Illustrations or within the department to help report progress.

The following facial positions are advisable:

- At rest (solemn)
- Eyebrows raised
- Gentle eye closure
- Smiling with mouth open AND mouth closed
- Snarling (showing top and bottom teeth)
- Lip puckering (as though you were to kiss someone)
- Showing the bottom teeth

http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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Huddersfield Royal infirmary
Telephone: 01484 342434

Booking Office: 01484 728941

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z www. danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
براۓ مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"