

Facial palsy

Facial palsy is when nerves which help control face movement stop working properly.

This means your facial muscles become weak or completely paralysed. A side of your face may start to droop or twitch. If you're coping with a facial paralysis, your doctor may do tests to find out the cause.

Causes of facial palsy

Facial palsy can be caused by many different things, such as:

- skull fracture
- stroke
- tumour on your hearing nerve (acoustic neuroma), or the surgery to remove it
- viral infection (often linked to Bell's palsy)
- Ramsay Hunt syndrome (due to shingles)
- growths on your saliva gland(s)

How you can manage your facial palsy

- **Medications** – Your GP may prescribe you with medication to help you manage your facial palsy, such as oral steroids (like prednisolone) to reduce inflammation and decrease the likelihood of damage to nerve bundles, or antiviral medication (like Acyclovir).
- **Eye care** – If you have problems closing your eyes (blinking, sleeping), your doctor may prescribe you with eye drops or ointment to stop your eyes from getting too dry. You can use micropore tape to keep your eyes closed if you need help sleeping. Wraparound sunglasses or eyepatches can protect your eyes from sunlight, wind, and dust while you're outside.
- **Mouth care** – Take extra care when eating and cleaning. Chewing food and brushing your teeth may be more challenging on the affected side of your face.
- **Rest** – It's important to rest, as stress may affect your recovery.
- **Exercises** – Gentle facial massage can help relax muscles on our affected side. To do this, use the pads of your fingers to slowly massage your brow, temples, cheek, chin and neck. Don't over-exercise your facial muscles as forceful movements may affect your recovery.

When to seek help

If you feel these exercises are making your symptoms worse, take a break. You can also speak to your GP for further help. This doesn't mean it's anything too serious. It may be that you need some extra help to deal with the symptoms, and you may be referred to a physiotherapist.