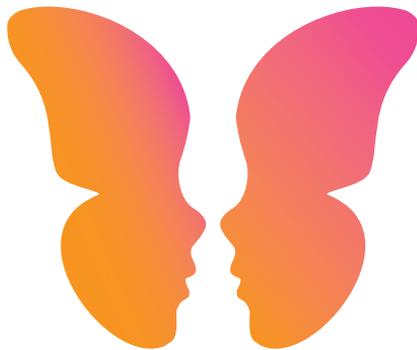


Facial Palsy Information for Young People



Children's Health Ireland
at Temple Street

What does facial palsy mean?

You may have noticed that some areas of your face feel different or are not working as they were. This is called facial palsy.

There are a number of reasons why this can happen. Your doctor will explain why it has happened to you when you meet.

How does the facial nerve work?

You have a facial nerve on each side of your face. Each nerve leaves your brain through a tiny channel in the skull and enters your face in front of your ear. You will see the pattern they follow in the photo below. Branches of this nerve are responsible for the different ways your face can move which are listed below:

- Frowning
- Raising your eyebrows
- Closing your eyes
- Wrinkling your nose
- Moving your lips
- Smiling
- Pulling your jaw and corners of your mouth down gently



The facial nerve is also responsible for producing tears and saliva and taste for part of the tongue.

Causes of Facial Palsy

Facial palsy can have a number of different causes. It may be congenital which means you were born with it. It can also happen as a result of an infection, an injury such as an accident, or after an operation or other treatments.

Reason for my facial palsy:
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.....
.....

Facial Palsy Symptoms: What happens once the facial nerve is damaged?

Facial palsy can affect people differently depending on why you have it and the specific nerve branches affected. It can happen slowly over time or very quickly. Symptoms may either improve or worsen over time, depending on the type of facial nerve damage and the cause of your facial nerve palsy.

Some types of facial palsy will affect how your face moves and feels.

Your face may look floppy because there are no nerve signals telling the muscles to contract.

How does facial palsy affect the facial muscles and functions of the face?

Forehead:

- Unable to frown

Eye area:

- Unable to raise your eyebrow
- Unable to close your eye fully or blink
- May have a watery eye or dry eye
- Drooping of the lower eyelid which may make your eye appear wider
- Pain in your eye
- Difficulty with bright lights
- Soreness or redness of the white of the eye

Mouth:

- Corner of your mouth pulls down/droops
- Unable to smile on affected side
- Not able to puff up your cheeks, whistle or blow
- Altered taste, things taste different
- Tingling of the affected half of your tongue
- Difficulty eating and drinking
- Difficulty brushing your teeth and spitting out
- Drooling from the weak corner of your mouth
- Too much or not enough saliva (dry mouth)
- Difficulty speaking because of weakness in your lips and cheek

Nose:

- Difficulty in breathing
- Unable to flare nostril
- Unable to wrinkle the nose

Ear(s):

- Pain in or near the ear
- Hearing loss
- Sounds may be louder on the affected side

Ways facial palsy affects me

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At your appointment you may meet a number of health professionals including :

- Physiotherapist
- Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) Surgeon
- Ophthalmologist (Eye Specialist)
- Paediatrician
- Neurologist
- Geneticist
- Psychologist
- Speech & Language Therapist
- Paediatric Dentist
- Occupational Therapist
- Social Worker
- Clinical Photographer

Treatment Options: What can be done to help?

There are a number of treatments which we may suggest to help you.

- 1 We might wait and see if it improves on its own.
- 2 Physiotherapist may teach you a number of exercises to prevent further problems. It is very important to look after the parts of your face which are affected.
- 3 If you are unable to blink or produce tears your Ophthalmologist (Eye Specialist) may give drops to use every day.



- 4 If food gets trapped inside your mouth, your gums and teeth are at risk of decay. It is important to visit your dentist for regular checkups and advice.
- 5 If you find your mouth is very dry, talk to your dentist for advice.

My plan is:

1 _____

2 _____

Possible Operations

There are a number of operations that your doctor may talk to you about.

What can I expect if my facial palsy recovers?

- Some areas of your face may start moving earlier than others.
- Your eye may seem smaller and the corner of the mouth may seem raised on the affected side.
- Your cheek may feel tight and stiff.
- The cheek branches of the nerve tend to recover first.
- The forehead and chin branches of the nerve take longer to get working again.

What is synkinesis?

Sometimes, when facial paralysis is improving, nerves may cause your face to move in an unexpected way.

Synkinesis means 'movement together' and can occur in the later stages of recovery and means that different parts of the face move together outside your control. This happens as the nerves recover, because if one branch of the nerve is activated all the others join in to try and help, for example you want to smile and the eye closes at the same time.

Synkinesis will improve as your recovery continues, and you can help by getting into the habit of stopping the movements from happening. Your physiotherapist will show you how to do this.



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