

THE FACE

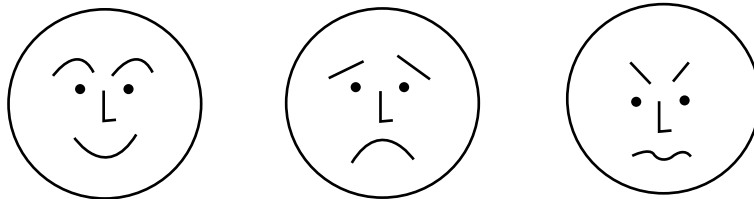


THE FACE PLACE

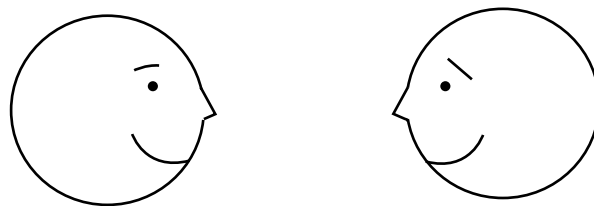
The Face

Why are the muscles of the face important?

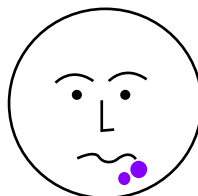
- They enable us to demonstrate how we feel



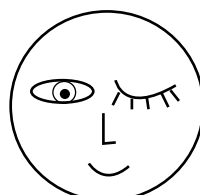
- They help us to communicate e.g. clear speech, look interested in what is being said



- Eat and drink without making a mess



- Protect the eye e.g. blinking and being able to close the eye when asleep



FACIAL WEAKNESS

Weakness of the muscles of the face can be very distressing. It can cause problems with activities such as: -

- Speaking
- Eating
- Displaying emotions
- Ability to socialise e.g. reluctant to go out and meet people
- Protecting the eye e.g. blinking, closing the eye when asleep

THE FACIAL MUSCLES AND NERVES

The facial muscles are also called the muscles of facial expression.

In order to work they need a nerve supply.

The nerve to the facial muscles is called the facial nerve.

It is the seventh cranial nerve which means it arises from part of the brain called the brainstem.

It travels through a bony canal inside the skull. It leaves the skull near the ear from where it then makes connections via five nerve branches to the muscles of the face.

WHAT CAUSES FACIAL MUSCLE WEAKNESS?

Inflammation, infection, compression or injury to the facial nerve will result in weakness or occasionally complete paralysis of one side of the face.

COMMON CAUSES

Bell's Palsy - this is the most common cause of facial paralysis, due to the Herpes simplex virus (the virus that causes cold sores)

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome - Varicella Zoster Virus (the virus that causes chicken pox)

Direct injury - e.g. fractures of the skull

Tumours - which are on, or close to the facial nerve (this is rare)

TREATMENT DEPENDS ON THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

It may consist of: -

Medication

Steroids, antiviral drugs, antibiotics. These are usually started soon after the onset of the problem i.e. within a few days

Surgical treatment

To take pressure off the nerve or repair damage that may have occurred to the nerve

Practical advice

Looking after your eye
Keeping your mouth clean
Eating and speaking more easily

Exercises

To help regain and improve the quality of movement.
Massage to relax the face

Emotional help and support - It helps to be able to discuss problems with someone who understands or has suffered with the same problem.

THE GOOD NEWS - YOUR RECOVERY

Bell's Palsy - whilst distressing most people get better in a few weeks, without the need of having any special treatment. Those few that continue to have some residual problems can be helped.

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome - again improvement occurs over a period of time, weeks, sometimes months. It usually takes longer than a Bell's Palsy to recover.

Injury to the nerve - the speed of recovery depends on the degree of injury and whether a surgical repair is required.

You will have already been advised by your doctor what has caused your facial weakness. Whether any further treatment is required and how long it will take to get better. Remember we are here to help you

The following advice sheets will help you, if there is anything that you do not understand please ask.

MOUTH CARE

- It is very important to keep the mouth clean. Food may remain inside the paralysed or weak cheek. If left it will cause infection.
- After every meal always check that your mouth is empty and no food remains.
- To do this gently sweep a finger inside your cheek.
- Also check to make sure that you have not accidentally bitten the inside of your cheek
- You must be sure to clean your teeth carefully and regularly

