

## **Advice for people with acute facial paralysis**

This leaflet is suitable for people who are experiencing a floppy face and difficulty closing their eye during the acute stage of facial palsy.

It contains important information on how to look after your eye and also massage and stretching information to maintain the health, flexibility and length of the muscles of your face, alongside advice about some of the early signs and symptoms associated with facial palsy which you may be experiencing.

The acute stage of facial palsy can last for a variable length of time from days to 4 months or more, depending on the degree of damage to your facial nerve. Most people want to do something to get their face working, but trying too hard can lead to problems later on in your recovery. Early specialist facial therapy has been proven to improve long term outcomes from facial palsy so it's a good idea to access a specialist therapist if you have not had full recovery after 4 weeks. Therapists are not trained in specialist facial therapy at university so please ensure you see a therapist who has done specialist post-graduate training and is a member of Facial Therapy Specialists International. Trained facial therapists are generally physiotherapists, occupational therapists or speech therapists by background.

There is evidence to suggest that exercising the facial muscles too forcefully can lead to the nerve fibres 'miswiring' as they recover. This contributes to a longer-term symptom called synkinesis, (unwanted involuntary movement of muscles, or groups of muscles when you are making facial movements). Your facial nerve is no different from any other part of the body and will take time to heal. The information in this leaflet will ensure that you are doing all you can to help your healing nerve.

Please avoid trying to force your face to move whilst the nerve is recovering. It can be tempting to check what your face can do in the mirror each day, try to avoid this. The facial muscles remain viable (i.e. will not lose their strength) for approximately 18 months after facial palsy so there is no need to 'strengthen' them during recovery. The most common long term issue after facial palsy is actually tightness and overactivity on the affected side so overdoing it early can make the long term difficulties worse. Please avoid all electrical treatments as these also increase the likelihood of synkinesis and long term tightness.

It is fine to let your face move 'normally' i.e. when you feel happy let yourself smile. This type of movement is less forceful than when you 'try' to make your face move. Also if you suppress this type of emotional facial movement it can negatively affect your mood.

Anyone in any stage of recovery from facial palsy can benefit from attending a support group to help reduce isolation and assist recovery. Information on the support groups run in the UK can be found on the Facial Palsy UK website <http://www.facialpalsy.org.uk/support/local-groups/> or by emailing [support@facialpalsy.org.uk](mailto:support@facialpalsy.org.uk)

**FacialPalsy<sup>UK</sup>**  
INFORM • SUPPORT • RESEARCH

The UK's facial palsy support and research charity

To find out more visit [www.facialpalsy.org.uk](http://www.facialpalsy.org.uk) or call 0330 030 9333

To register for information about a local support group email [support@facialpalsy.org.uk](mailto:support@facialpalsy.org.uk)

*'It was wonderful to meet other people who truly understand how I feel'*

*'The support group has been the most valuable part of my recovery'*

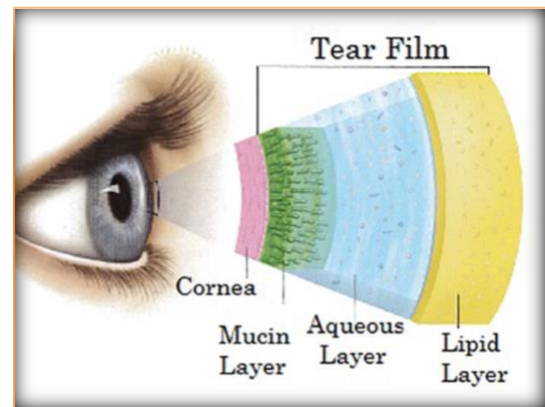
*East Grinstead Support Group attendees*

## **Early eye care**

### **Why do eyes blink?**

Tears contain oil and mucin as well as water, and each time we blink the tears are spread over the eye by the eyelids. Blinking has several important functions:

- protecting the surface of the eye from drying out
- cleaning the surface of the eye by removing dust and debris
- encouraging drainage of tears away from the eye
- blinking refreshes the surface of the eye with a smooth layer of tears every few seconds and is necessary for a healthy eye and clear vision.



### **What happens if my eye is not blinking fully/at all?**

Your eye may feel gritty or sore and may become red.  
Your eye may make excessive tears which constantly run.

### **Why is this important?**

Inability to blink, produce tears and close the eye means that the surface of the eye (the cornea) has very little protection. The cornea can become damaged which can seriously affect your vision.

### **Is this serious?**

Drying or damage to the eye will affect vision. The eye may become red, sore and sensitive to light. It may also water more. An ulcer can form on the surface of the eye. This is a serious condition and if not treated promptly will cause permanent scarring and loss of vision.  
If you have any of these symptoms you must seek urgent medical advice.

### **How can these problems be prevented?**

It is very important that you follow the eye care advice that you have been given. Advice may include using preservative free eye drops regularly in the day, thicker eye ointment and/or taping the eye shut at night, using a finger to manually blink the eye regularly and stretching the eyelid to stop it stiffening up. Occasionally minor surgery may be required.

### **Artificial tears, gels and ointments**

Extra moisture for the eye will be required both during the day and at night time. Not using drops often enough can cause the eye to become excessively watery. This is because it is trying to compensate for the eye being so dry. You should have been prescribed drops to use and told how often they should be used. Gels and ointments are thicker than artificial tears and therefore protect the eye for a longer period of time. Because they are thicker, they make vision blurry which is why they are usually used at bedtime. If using drops more than 4 x per day they must be preservative free.

### **Manual Blink – as often as possible throughout the day**

A manual blink helps to spread tears over the surface of the eye and so helps to keep the eye moist. It also maintains the mobility of the eyelid so that it doesn't stiffen as this would make it harder to regain normal eyelid movement in the future.

An average adult blinks 10 times per minute. Therefore, if you are unable to actively blink at all you should aim to carry out a manual blink as often as possible, with a minimum of one manual blink every 10 minutes. You should always do a manual blink if your eye feels dry and after inserting drops.

### **Technique**

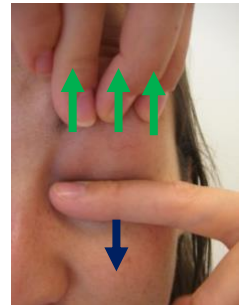
1. Look straight ahead
2. Look down, this will relax and lower the upper lid
3. Using the back of your finger bring the upper lid down into its fully closed position

### **Eyelid stretch – affected side only – just before sleep**

The eyelid gets stiff and contracted when the eye is not closing or blinking properly. It is important to stretch your eyelid every day as well as doing manual blinks throughout the day.

Hold the eyelid closed with one finger and with the other hand stretch the eyebrow upwards until you feel a gentle pain free stretch. Hold for 1 minute.

Compare with the unaffected side – repeat until both sides feel the same.



## Taping your eye shut

**Please note for some pictures we have used coloured tape – this is only to make the photos clearer.**

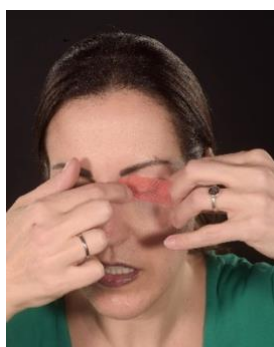
If your eyelid does not close fully when asleep you may be advised that that it should be taped shut at night. It is important to do this correctly.

If you cannot or prefer not to use tape you can purchase a specialist dry eye night mask. We recommend Eyeseals Hydrating Sleep Mask ([www.eyewear-accessories.co.uk](http://www.eyewear-accessories.co.uk)).

Following patient feedback and discussion with our ophthalmology team, for taping we recommend using 3M Transpore tape (2.5cm width), Mepitac soft silicone tape (2cm x 3m) or Siltape by Advancis Medical (4cm). The silicone tapes are the gentlest on the skin. All can be purchased online, at your local pharmacy or on prescription.

You can also use a product called ‘Gladwrap Press’n’Seal’ which is available online in the UK. It needs to be cut to size but then works similarly to tape and is gentle on the skin. If you find any other additional useful products, please let us know.

1. Cut a piece of tape (or wrap) slightly longer than the width of the eye.
2. If using night time ointments or gels insert these into your eye first.
3. Look down and assist eye closure with the back of your finger
4. Apply tape (or wrap) from inner corner to outer corner of the eye in a horizontal direction so that it extends beyond the width of the eyebrow. Ensure that the eyelid is fully closed and the tape covers the area following the contours of the eye (as shown in pictures). Please note that if you don’t follow the contours of the eye correctly your eyelid can pop open and expose your eye to the tape, which could cause more damage.



5. Some people find that the lower lid of their eye also drops as a result of facial palsy. In this situation apply a thin piece of tape to lift the lower lid. Most people say this increases comfort considerably and it can be worn all day. Instructions are given on the next page.
6. When removing the tape please don’t rip it off. Think of taking the skin away from the tape rather than pulling the tape off the skin.

## **Eyelid Splinting**

If your eye doesn't blink or close fully it can be helpful to splint it in the day. This stops it being so open which reduces drying and makes blinking easier. Just use a small piece of tape applied to the eyelid as shown in the pictures. You can adjust the length and width of the tape to suit your eye and the amount of help your eye needs.



## **Taping for the lower eye lid**

You may find that taping the lower eye lid will help if it has dropped or is turning out. 2 strips of Transpore works best for this technique.

Cut or tear a piece of Transpore tape slightly longer than the width of your eye.

To make 2 thinner strips, tear it along its length either once to give two thinner strips, or twice to give even thinner strips (you may prefer the thinner strips as they are less visible).

Apply one end of the first strip just below the inner corner of your lower eye lid. Lift the lower lid with your finger (so it matches the other lower lid's position) and stick the outer end down to hold the lower eye lid up. Then take a second piece and starting just below the outer corner of the eye apply the tape, lift the lower eyelid up again and then attach the tape near the end of the brow to hold the lower lid in place.



## General advice

- Immediately after putting drops in your eye close your eye using your finger and press gently on the corner of the eye by your nose for around one minute. This is called punctal occlusion. It blocks the tear duct, meaning the drop stays in the eye where it can do most good. If you don't do this the drop can drain down the tear duct and be lost. If you miss your eye with your eye drop then put another drop in.



- Watch out for situations where you will automatically blink less often, such as reading, watching TV and looking at a computer screen. When doing these activities, try to manually blink more often, take frequent rests and use your eye drops more frequently.
- Avoid places where there are fumes, smoke or dust which can irritate your eyes.
- Protect your eyes from the wind by wearing wrap-around glasses or sunglasses. You can buy special dry eye glasses called moisture chamber glasses online e.g. Ziena, 7eye. Eyewear Accessories stocks these in the UK and can provide guidance when contacted.
- Cover and protect the eye when washing hair and taking a shower. Swimming goggles can be helpful, or simply hold your affected eye closed with your finger as you rinse your hair.
- If you are sensitive to light wear sunglasses.
- Avoid sitting next to or in front of fans, open car windows and blow heaters.
- Avoid air conditioning that will dry out your eye.
- If you are generally prone to dry eyes try taking flaxseed oil and/or using humidifiers.
- We also recommended you use warm compresses on your eyes for 5-10 minutes 1-2 times per day, followed by eyelid massage. This ensures oil can flow from the glands in the eyelids over the eye which stops the tears evaporating from the eye too easily.

**These are eye care guidelines. You must adhere to the eye care procedure that has been recommended to you by your specialist if you have seen one. If the eye becomes sore or red you must seek medical advice.**



## **Advice for people suffering from dry mouth**

### **Why does facial palsy cause a dry mouth?**

Two of the three pairs of salivary glands in your mouth are stimulated by the facial nerve. When this part of the nerve is damaged less saliva is produced and people may experience a dry mouth. The medical term for dry mouth due to lack of saliva is xerostomia. If you have had surgery affecting your parotid gland you are even more likely to struggle with dry mouth.

### **Why is saliva important?**

- It helps you prepare food, keeps your mouth clean, and protects teeth from plaque and tooth decay.
- It helps protect gums and prevents tooth loss.
- It keeps your mouth moist when you are speaking so the lips and tongue can move smoothly over our teeth.
- It helps us chew and prepare food ready for swallowing.
- It contains enzymes important for digestion.
- It helps us taste our food.

### **What can help a dry mouth?**

- There are many different products to help with dry mouth, for example, special toothpastes, mouth gels/sprays which act like saliva and mouth washes. They do not contain alcohol, menthol or foaming agents which cause dryness.
- You can ask your GP or dentist to prescribe these products for you. Alternatively, you can purchase these from the internet which gives competitive prices, or from some local pharmacies. The purchase price for some products is cheaper than the price of a prescription. Free samples are also available from some company websites.
- Good oral hygiene is very important as people with dry mouth are at a higher risk of tooth decay and gum disease. Regular tooth brushing after meals and 6 monthly dental checks will be essential. Seeing a dental hygienist is recommended and using floss, interdental brushes or a waterpik after brushing is advisable.
- If a dry mouth is affecting your ability to chew and prepare food always add gravy, sauces or butter to help with lubrication.
- Keep a bottle/glass of water with you so you can take frequent sips. This will help keep your mouth moist. Avoid sipping drinks containing sugar as this will contribute to tooth decay. Dehydration will make your dry mouth symptoms worse so make sure you drink plenty of water or drinks which do not contain caffeine or alcohol.
- Avoid or reduce the amount of alcohol and caffeine as these cause dry mouth. Try decaffeinated tea or coffee products as substitutes. Smoking also causes dry mouth so you may want to avoid this or limit the amount that you do smoke.
- You may also need to check with your doctor whether any medication you take causes dry mouth.

## **What kinds of problems result from a dry mouth?**

- Discomfort
- Bad breath (halitosis)
- Difficulty swallowing and chewing
- Difficulty speaking
- Increased risk of tooth decay, gum disease and oral infections
- Dry and cracked lips
- Dry, rough tongue
- Mouth ulcers and sore mouth
- Altered taste

## **General oral health and facial palsy**

Even if you don't have a dry mouth, having facial palsy still greatly increases your risk of tooth decay and gum disease on the affected side of your mouth. Regular tooth brushing after meals and 6 monthly dental checks will be essential. Seeing a dental hygienist is recommended and using floss, interdental brushes and/or a waterpik after brushing is advisable. It is recommended by dental experts that you use an electric toothbrush and always start by brushing the teeth on the affected side of your mouth.

## **Why has my facial palsy made it difficult to breathe through one nostril?**

Damage to the facial nerve can affect the muscular support of the nostrils and therefore make it difficult to breathe through one nostril, especially at night. Nasal dilators prevent nostril collapse and allow more air into the nose.

Try this: Looking into the mirror, press the side of the unaffected nostril to close it. With your mouth closed, breathe in through the affected nostril. If it tends to collapse try propping it open with the clean end of something like a matchstick. If breathing is easier with the nostril propped open, nasal dilators may help you with your snoring problems.

The following products may be helpful;

### **Nasal Strips (10 pack)**

These are placed across the bridge of your nose to help hold the nostril more open.

### **Nasal Dilator**

This is a clear silicone device which is inserted into one nostril to keep it open and reduce airway resistance when you breathe in.

Both of these products are available from your local pharmacy or online.



## **Advice on cheek taping for a floppy face**

During the acute stage of facial palsy when your facial muscles are paralysed or very weak, the affected side of your face will feel heavy. You may also notice that the weak side of your face is being pulled across by the strong side and that speaking and eating and drinking are difficult because the facial muscles have no strength.

Taping to support your cheek and lower eyelid can improve your comfort during the day as well as helping with speech, eating and drinking as it helps keep the face more symmetrical. The type of tape you choose is important and Transpore (2.5cm) tape or preferably Mepitac (2cm) silicone tape is recommended. You can buy this online or order from your pharmacist. This tape can also be covered with a powder foundation to help disguise it.

***Please note for some pictures we have used coloured tape – this is only to make the photos clearer.***

### **Taping the weak cheek**

Applying tape to the weak cheek will lift it up and support it. It will also reduce lengthening of soft tissues, reduce over-activity of the unaffected side of your face and keep the face in 'mid-line' (i.e. as symmetrical as possible on both sides).

You may find that you have to do massage and stretches to the uninjured side to help centralise your face before you apply the tape.

It is advisable to keep the tape on all day, as constantly removing the tape may make your skin sore.

Tear off a piece of tape approximately 7cm long.

Apply one end to the corner of the lip and press it along a diagonal line up to the cheekbone. Put pressure along the tape as you make your way up to the cheekbone.

There is no right or wrong way to tape your cheek – it is a case of experimenting to see what suits you best.



### **An alternative method of cheek taping**

Take a 7 cm piece of tape and tear it into four thinner strips

The first piece should be placed upwards along the jaw line as shown

Place another piece from the corner of your jaw up to the top of the ear

Place another piece from the corner of the nose out to the side

Place a final piece from the corner of the mouth towards the ear lobe



Remember that repeated removal can make skin sore. Apply once daily and leave in place.

Stop using the tape if you experience any side effects and seek GP advice.

### **Face lift tape.**

It is also now possible to purchase packs of 'face lift tape' online. This is incredibly lightweight to wear but can be fiddly at first!

To use this, remove one side of the white backing tape then apply that end of the tape to the bottom of the area to be lifted.

Lift the face into position with your other hand then gently stretch the tape (the central part is stretchy) before removing the other piece of white backing tape and sticking the top end down.

Finally remove the outer tape covering (with blue arrows on it)



### **My brow is very heavy and affecting my vision can I tape that up?**

We don't recommend you lift your brow with tape as often the weight of a droopy brow can help protect the eye and improve your eye closure. If you tape up the brow the eye can be less well protected and more at risk of damage and dryness.

If you are struggling to function as your brow is impeding your vision then you should speak to a specialist about your options.

### **I want to do something to help my face, if I can't do exercises what can I do?**

It's definitely not good to force any movement at this stage nor is it helpful for recovery. However, one thing that can be beneficial is just to pay more attention to how the **unaffected** side of your face feels when it moves.

Prior to having facial palsy, you would never have paid much attention to how your face feels when it moves. Whilst you are waiting for recovery on the affected side it's a great time to pay attention to the unaffected side and start learning about how your face feels during movement and function. Movements to pay attention to include smiling, closing the eyes, speaking, eating and drinking. Just be curious about how the unaffected side of your face feels when you do these things, particularly how gentle the unaffected side is. This can really help your understanding of how the affected side should feel when it starts to recover. It's really common for people to try to move much too hard as they recover so this can help you avoid making this common mistake!

## **Working for clearer speech**

You may feel that your speech has changed and that people are finding it difficult to understand you. You may also be feeling self-conscious about your speech at home, at work and when socialising or meeting people for the first time.

The following are strategies and tips that may make talking easier.

- Slow down the rate of your speech
- Slightly increase the volume if you think people are mishearing you
- Maintain good eye contact with the listener
- Taping the affected cheek gives support and may make speech easier. Often, when the cheek is weak it puffs outwards when you speak and taping prevents this from happening.
- Taping directs the air flow through the middle of the lips when we speak and will make you look more symmetrical when you talk.
- Taping feels more comfortable as the muscle is supported and the weight lifted.
- If you don't want to tape your cheek you can just place your hand against the affected cheek to lift and support it.

Sounds which you may find difficult are those made with the lips e.g. p, b, m, f, r, v, w. All of these sounds require some degree of lip closure, or lip movement. The degree of difficulty may depend where the sound is within the word or sentence. When the muscles are very weak there is no benefit in practising sounds or strengthening muscles. You need to wait for at least some nerve recovery before starting rehabilitation.

## **What is non-verbal communication?**

Non-verbal communication is how you communicate without using words. We use non-verbal communication all the time and we are mostly unaware of this. Below are some examples of non-verbal communication.

- Smiling
- Scowling
- Pouting
- Winking
- Nodding
- Making eye contact
- Avoiding eye contact
- Gesturing
- The way you stand or hold your arms
- The way you dress, wear makeup and choose your clothes

## **How does facial palsy change your non-verbal communication?**

- Being self-conscious may make you lower your head and avoid eye contact.
- You may prevent yourself from smiling so that your asymmetry isn't so obvious. As a result people may think you are unfriendly because you don't smile.
- You may develop gestures to try and mask your asymmetry, for example, covering your mouth with your hand. This will make it harder for people to understand you.
- You may bother less with your physical appearance because you don't like looking in the mirror.

## **What can help?**

- Always look at the person you are communicating with in order to show that you are interested in them and to hold their attention. Looking away may encourage the other person to look or search harder to make eye contact with you. Avoiding eye contact may also convey disinterest.
- If passing someone in the street a 'head nod' or thumbs up is as good as a smile for a passing greeting.
- Avoid covering your mouth when speaking – it will make it more difficult for the other person to understand.
- If you don't feel you can smile, give encouraging gestures to show you are listening carefully, for example, small, gentle head nodding to show you understand or empathise.

## **Eating and drinking advice for people living with facial palsy**

### **Why does facial palsy cause problems with eating and drinking?**

Facial palsy can cause weakness of the lips which can make it difficult to seal your lips around cups and cutlery resulting in leakage of food or fluid when eating and drinking. Eating and drinking can be messy which may make you reluctant to eat out or in the company of others.

Facial palsy may also cause weakness in the cheek muscles. This may cause food to collect in the weak side of your mouth. One of the functions of the cheek muscle is to keep the food in the centre of the mouth or between the teeth for chewing. A weak cheek may mean that chewing and preparing food for swallowing may be difficult. Food may pouch or collect in your cheek and be difficult for you to clear.

Weakness of the lips and cheek may also make brushing your teeth and spitting out difficult.

### **What can help with drinking and eating?**

- It is often easier to drink from a thin-lipped cup or glass, for example, a fine bone china cup/mug.
- Avoid hard, chewy foods as these can be difficult to chew and prepare for swallowing. Choose a soft easy to chew diet, (e.g. pasta dishes, fish with sauce, well cooked meats and vegetables).
- Try smaller mouthfuls as these are easier to control and less likely to spill from your mouth.
- If your mouth is dry then make sure your food is moist by adding extra butter, gravy or sauces.
- Brush your teeth after meals to ensure no food debris is left behind or trapped inside your cheek. You may need to use your finger to clear any food debris from your cheek. It is important to do this in order to avoid tooth decay.



## Facial Massage

### Why do I need to carry out facial massage?

Massage is important to keep your face supple as your nerve recovers. Daily massage will help:

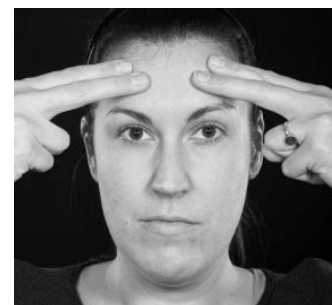
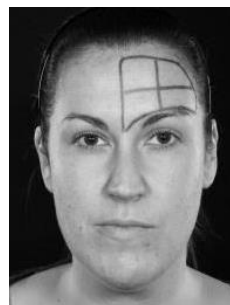
- Reduce stiffness
- Improve circulation to the muscles
- Identify parts of the face that feel too tight or too loose
- Keep you in touch with your facial muscles
- Preserve the idea of movement of your face

### **You should massage both sides of the face. Once a day, every day**

- Use firm pressure with the pads of the fingers
- Small, slow, circular movements
- Don't let your fingers slide over the surface of your skin, they should remain still whilst moving the muscles deeply in circles
- Try to stay relaxed as you massage your face. If it helps you can rest your elbows on a table in front of you so your arms don't get tired. We tend to massage both sides of the face at the same time for ease.

### Start working at the forehead

Move your hands to cover the whole forehead area so that no muscles get missed out. The areas outlined in the pictures on the right show the area that you need to be covering during this massage. You should spend 2 minutes massaging the forehead area every day.



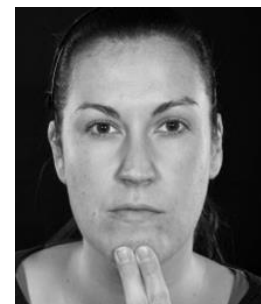
### Now massage the temple area

When you are ready move your hands to the temple area. Massage here for at least 1 minute.



### Now massage the chin area

Work from the outside in as shown in the pictures to cover all the muscles. Finish by using one hand in the centre of the chin. You should do at least 2 minutes in the chin area.





**Now massage the cheek area**

As this is a large area you may find it helpful to imagine 3 lines across your face. Massage your way along these lines as shown in the picture. Remember to keep the massage firm and not miss any areas out. Spend at least 3 minutes covering the cheek area.



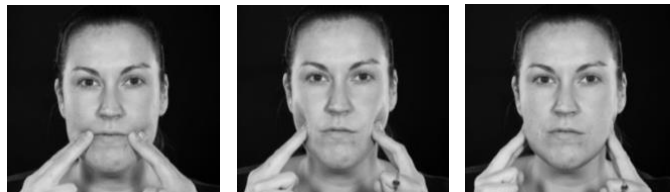
Top line



Middle line



Bottom line

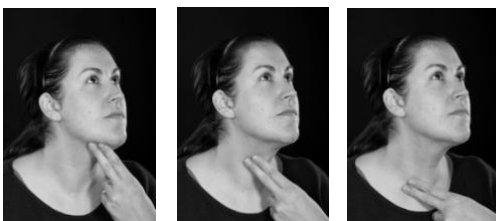


**Finally massage the neck on the affected side**

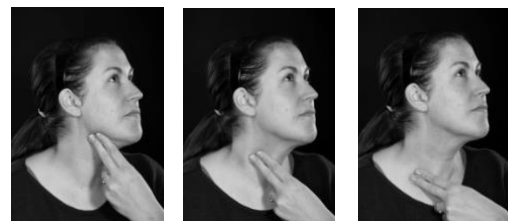
You need to cover the area between the jawline and the collarbone working down the lines shown in the image. Spend at least a minute on each line. Firstly do firm circles down from chin to collarbone (line 1). Then down the middle of the neck (line 2) and then down from under the ear (line 3). You also need to do a kneading massage along the jawline itself (line 4).



Line 1



Line 2



Line 3



Jawline



## **Stretches and trigger point soft tissue release for the unaffected side**

### **Why do you need to do trigger point soft tissue release and stretches?**

1. Stretching will help lengthen the muscles to get them back to a normal resting length when they have been overworking.
  2. It will help get the 'midline' back into the centre of your face (notice in the picture how the midline passes through the tip of the nose and the centre of the lips absolutely vertically)
  3. Stretching will make your face feel more comfortable and make it more symmetrical – this will mean that when the affected side starts working again the muscles are in the correct position to be activated.
- If you feel your fingers slipping during stretches wear disposable gloves.
  - Make sure that your 'midline' is central in the mirror after stretching



### **Cheek and chin soft tissue release (do these on your unaffected/overactive side)**

To do your cheek and chin soft tissue release place your thumb inside the cheek with your fingers on the outside and grip firmly. Gently squeeze and slowly pull the hand right down to the lips. Work on each area of the cheek and chin in turn imagining you are going round the clock. Stretch down to the top lip from 12'o'clock, 5 past and 10 past. Then stretch across to the corner of the lips from quarter past.

**Do 5 slow, soft tissue releases in each area**

If you find any 'trigger points' (which are very thick tender spots in the muscle) then gently squeeze them for 1 minute (or until you feel the tenderness dissipate) then do 5 releases again over that area – keep going until all trigger points have gone.

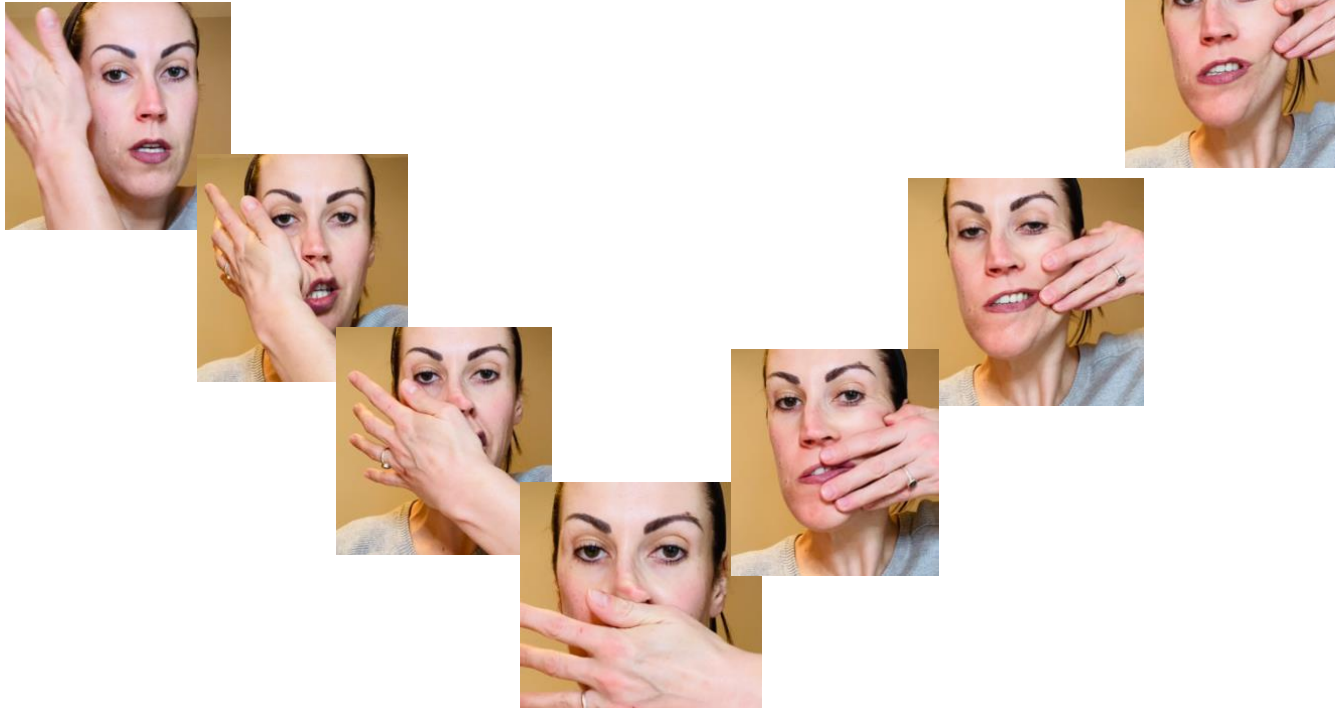
**The 'midline' should be straight at the end of your stretches** – if you need to touch the tight cheek and look in the mirror to help you get it to relax downwards as well, then practice this throughout the day too. If the midline is not straight, stretch your muscles and relax again until it is.



Try to avoid overusing the unaffected side as you wait for the other side to recover. It will tend to be very overactive without you realizing. Putting your hand on the unaffected side can help to remind it to 'calm down' and be gentler while you are talking, laughing etc. This will prevent the face being very unbalanced.

If you have used your face a lot (e.g., talking, eating, laughing) then it will tend to tighten up on the unaffected side whilst the affected side is floppy or less active. Every time you know you have used your face a lot do a couple of external stretches just to get your face back into midline. We call these 'C stretches'.

Simply use your opposite hand to smooth the unaffected cheek downwards (starting right at the top of the cheek) and then sweep the hand and fingers firmly across the lips before pulling the affected side up with the fingers as shown in the pictures below.



**Find additional videos of stretching and taping for management of the floppy face at**  
<http://www.facialpalsy.org.uk/support/self-help-videos/management-of-flaccid-facial-paralysis-floppy-face/>

### **If I feel I need someone to talk to**

Facial Palsy UK provide a wealth of support on their website [www.facialpalsy.org.uk](http://www.facialpalsy.org.uk)  
If you are struggling with your mental health you can speak to your GP or call 111  
For information on mental health support you can visit [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) or call them on 0300 123 3393.  
CALM provides listening services, information and support on 0800 58 58 58 or via [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)  
The Samaritans are available 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk on 116 123 or via [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
Shout provide a 24/7 text support service; just text 85258 (SHOUT) or visit [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org)

**I have got to 4 weeks and my face still isn't better; now what?**

Please don't panic if recovery is slow. Sometimes nerves take a little longer to recover and the first signs of recovery are not seen until approximately 4 months after facial palsy begins.

Continue your massage at this stage and continue stretching the unaffected side of your face until your midline is back in the middle of your face again.

If we don't move any part of our body for a prolonged period the muscles can get stiff and tight. Therefore, if your facial palsy continues beyond 4 weeks it is a good idea to start some **gentle** stretches on the affected side if your facial muscles start to get a bit stiff.

The idea of stretching a muscle that is floppy may seem strange but any stiffness in the muscles will negatively affect your recovery.

You should always continue the eyelid stretch (as detailed previously) until your eye closes normally.

For the rest of the face the best idea is to compare the affected side to the unaffected side and see if it feels stiffer or tighter at all. If it does, you can gently stretch it until it feels as loose and stretchy as the unaffected side again. There are some examples of stretches to try below. If they do feel any tighter than the unaffected side then just gently hold the stretch for 1 minute and try to repeat 3 times a day until both sides feel as stretchy as each other again.

