

Information for patients and visitors

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# Facial Palsy

## Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Community & Therapy Services

**This leaflet has been designed to give you information on what to do to cope during the early stages of facial palsy and some useful tips on eye care.**



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## Introduction

### What is facial palsy?

Facial palsy results in weakness of the facial muscles caused by a temporary or permanent injury to the facial nerve. Initial presentation can be pain behind the ear and drooping of one side of the face. Also the appearance can be similar to a stroke but it is not stroke.

### What causes facial palsy?

Facial Palsy is usually caused by a simple viral infection and normally individuals recover within the first 6 to 12 weeks of it starting. However, if the nerve is more severely damaged it will need more time to repair and regrow.

### Treatment advice for the first 6 weeks:

1. Massage the face with some strokes upward and outwards toward the ear
2. Support the cheek with your hand whilst talking which can help with your pronouncing the letters B and P more clearly
3. Please make extra effort to keep the affected side of your mouth clean. Stuck food, lack of saliva and taste to the affected side of the mouth can lead to dental problems
4. Try not to focus movement to the good side of your face
5. If necessary use a straw to drink but make sure you place it in the centre of your mouth, completing the lip seal with finger pressure
6. Take good care of the affected eye as it will not be able to blink normally, fully

close or water itself properly and will be vulnerable to damage

7. We advise that you to:
  - use eye drops from the doctor
  - tape your eye closed at night
  - reduce work with computer screens if your eye feels sore
  - wear sunglasses if going outside
  - Get professional help if your eye feels sore and gritty
8. To help your confidence mix with people as soon as possible

### How You Can Help With Your Eye Care

Try closing your eye – even if you think it is closed ask someone else to check. Often the eyelid does not close properly and the eyeball rolls up (Bells Phenomenon) even though it feels closed to you and other people will still see the white of the eye.

Please never screw-up your face trying to force your eye to close. This will cause complications in your cheek. It is more natural to look down and then close the eye gently with a finger, when you remove the finger concentrate on keeping the eyelid closed.

If you cannot close your eye completely then follow these steps:

1. Use eye drops to keep the eye lubricated, for example by using: lacrilube or hypromellose. You need to use them regularly throughout the day (think how many times your eye would normally blink and that each time you do this your eye gets a wash)

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2. Use eyebaths with saline solution or plain water as these can be soothing
3. Protect your eyes from winds and drafts. For example, wrap-around glasses are good because they protect the side of your eye as well



4. Protective or dark glasses will help against bright light which occurs either naturally or artificially (artificial light can be glare from a computer screen). Also, ski or swimming goggles will be helpful in keeping shampoo out of your eyes
5. Avoid smoke filled rooms and air conditioning as these can cause problems to your eyes
6. Tape your eye shut at night or if it becomes sore in the day by using omnipore, micropore or surgical tape. You can do this by:
  - Looking down and gently closing the eye with your finger
  - Next stick it shut with eye ointment and then tape it
  - You can do both eyes at night if one alone feels strange

If you find taping difficult, or are using it for most for most of the day, then try an eye dressing.

Never use a gauze pad near the eye as this may cause scratching.

**If the eye feels sore or goes red then get professional advice as soon as possible.**

### **How long should I continue the eye care explained in this leaflet?**

Eye care should be maintained until the eye shuts and blinks properly.

### **Reference Section**

Lindens Clinic

Web page: [www.dianafarragher.co.uk](http://www.dianafarragher.co.uk)

### **Contact Details for Further Information**

Physiotherapy Departments:

Scunthorpe: 01724 203751

Grimsby: 01472 875218

### **Concerns and Queries**

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

**For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital** – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

**For Scunthorpe General Hospital** – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:  
[nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

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