

Department of Neurosurgery

Exercises for facial weakness

This leaflet has been created for patients who have a facial weakness as a result of neurosurgery to remove an acoustic neuroma. It contains many exercises that will help to improve this weakness.

Facial weakness

The facial nerve (which is a nerve that supplies the muscles of facial expression) and the acoustic nerve (the nerve of hearing and balance) run very close together. Due to their anatomical position, the facial nerve is always attached to the surface of the tumour and is at risk during tumour removal. The risk of facial weakness after this operation depends on the size of the tumour and how tightly it is stuck to the facial nerve.

- With small tumours, it is nearly always possible to preserve the facial nerve anatomically (i.e. not seen to damage it 'by eye'), but the facial muscles may be weak for a number of months afterwards.
- With some larger tumours, and even very occasionally small tumours, it is not possible to spare the facial nerve. If the facial nerve is completely lost, or fails to recover after the operation, there are a number of plastic surgical operations that can be undertaken to restore some function (your doctor can discuss this with you).

Facial exercises

- All muscles like to be warmed up before having to do any work. Use your massage routine as your pre-exercise warm up.
- Do your exercises in front of a mirror. They should be performed slowly. It is the quality of the movement that is important, not the quantity.
- Set aside uninterrupted time to do your exercises.
- Touching your face will help.
- Not all exercises on the list will be appropriate for you at this stage.
- Perform each exercise **five** times.

General exercises



Sit relaxed in front of a mirror.



Gently raise eyebrows, you can help the movement with your fingers.



Draw your eyebrows together, frown.



Wrinkle up your nose.



Take a deep breath through your nose, try and flare nostrils.

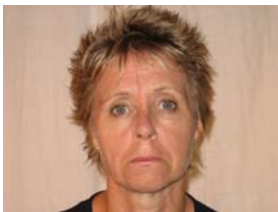


Gently move corners of mouth outwards into a smile. Try to keep the movement the same for each of the mouth. You can use fingers to help. Once in position take your fingers away and see if you can hold that smile.



Lift one side of the mouth... ...then the other.

Lips



Gently press lips together.



Hold pencil or lollipop stick between lips.



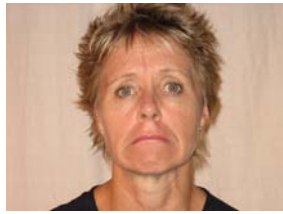
Try and hold a cotton bud in the corner of your mouth (on the weak side). This helps keep a good lip seal.



Bring lips together into 'OHH' position.



Try a full pucker.



Turn down corners of mouth.



Curl up top lip.



Turn down bottom



Try and wrinkle the skin on your chin.



Blow out cheeks.



Move air from one side of the cheek.....to the other.



Stretches



Gently open mouth, try and keep jaw relaxed.



Massage muscles along side of nose, to corner of mouth.



Sweep index finger inside cheek from top to bottom.

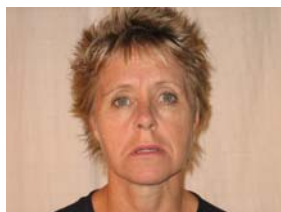


And from the back of your mouth to the front.

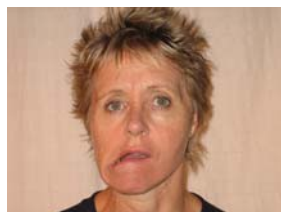


Place thumb inside of cheek, with index on the outside, gently massage cheek muscle.

Jaw exercises



Slide bottom teeth in front of top teeth.



Move jaw from side to side.

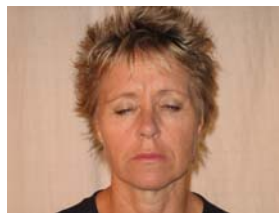


Open mouth wide.



Stick tongue out.

Exercises to help close the eye



Look down.



Gently place back of index finger on the eyelid, to keep the eye closed.



With opposite hand gently stretch eyebrow up working along the brow line. This will help relax the eyelid and stop it becoming stiff.



Now try and gently press eyelids together.



Narrow eyes as if looking into the sun.

Facial massage

- Massaging the face improves circulation to the muscles.
- It allows you to identify those parts of the face that feel too tight or loose.
- It keeps you in touch with your facial muscles.
- It helps improve the idea of movement.

Always use a facial massage cream/ moisturiser to prevent dragging of the skin.



Start by using gentle strokes on the neck in an upward motion.



Use alternate hands, from one side of the neck to the other. Repeat five times.



Move up to the jaw line, with all four fingers massage with circular movements from the ear to the chin.



Place thumbs on top of and index fingers under chin, massage in a circular and side to side motion for two minutes.



Now slide the hands to the cheeks and massage upwards in a circular motion for a few minutes.



Using your ring fingers, slide them from the outer corner of your eyes, under eyes, towards nose, and then up in between eyebrows, above eyebrows. Ensure all movements are gentle. Repeat five times.



Slide fingers to forehead, use tips of fingers to massage from temple to temple across the forehead with zigzag movements. Repeat five times.

Eye care

Why is this important?

- The inability to blink, produce tears and close the eye means that the surface of the eye (the cornea) has very little protection.
- It can become dry and easily damaged which can seriously affect your vision.
- Sometimes sensation to the surface of the eye may be lost, ie, loss of ability to feel pain.
- This means that without any sense of discomfort, dust or grit could enter the eye causing injury.

Is it serious?

- Drying or damage to the eye will affect vision. The eye may become red, sore and sensitive to light.
- An ulcer can form on the surface of the eye, which may cause permanent damage if not treated.
- This is serious condition and if not treated promptly will cause permanent scarring and loss of vision.

If any of these problems occur you must seek urgent medical advice.

How can these problems be prevented?

- It is very important to follow the eye care advice that you have been given.
- This will probably include protective drops, ointment and taping the eye shut at night.
- Occasionally minor surgery may be required.

Taping the eye shut

If your eyelid does not close fully when asleep you may be advised that your eye should be taped shut at night. You will be shown how to do this. It is important that the first time you do it you are watched to see it had been done correctly.

Stages

- Cut a piece of tape slightly longer than the width of the eye.
- If using night-time ointments/gels these should now be inserted into the eye.



Look down and assist eye closure with the back of your finger.



Apply tape 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; the tape is on the upper lid and covers an area underneath the eye.

Please note: If not done correctly the eyelid can easily pop open exposing the eye to the worse damage.

These are guidelines. You must adhere to the eye care procedure that has been recommended to you by your doctor. If the eye becomes sore or red you must seek medical advice.

Eye taping (alternative method)

Look ahead



Look down and place a piece of tape horizontally across the upper eyelid from the nose, to level with the outer edge of the eyebrow.



Apply another short piece of tape from a point almost midway below the lower lid and take it upwards obliquely in the direction of the outer edge of the eyebrow.



Finally join the two pieces of tape by placing another piece of tape from the top lid to the bottom lid.

Artificial tears

Extra moisture for the eye will be required, both during the day and at night. You will have been prescribed what drops to use and how often they should be used.

Technique for inserting drops into eye



Tilt head back and look at ceiling.
Gently pull lower lid down until
there is a small pocket.



Squeeze upturned bottle to release drop
into your eye. Do not allow the bottle or
vial to touch the eye or any other
surface.

Gels and ointments

Gels and ointments are usually required. These are thicker than the 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.

General advice

- Watch out for situations where you may blink less often, for example, reading, watching television and looking at a computer screen. Try to blink more often and take frequent rests.
- Avoid places where there are fumes, smoke or dust, which can irritate your eyes.
- Protect your eyes from the wind by wearing wrap around spectacles/sunglasses.
- Cover and protect the eye when washing hair or taking a shower.
- If you are sensitive to light wear sunglasses.
- Avoid sitting next to a fan or open car window.

NB These are guidelines. You must adhere to the eye care procedure that has been recommended to you by your doctor. If your eye becomes sore or red you must seek medical advice.

Adapted from:

Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust, Wessex Neurological Centre



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For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

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If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

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Portuguese

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Arabic

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Cantonese

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Turkish

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Bengali

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Document history

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