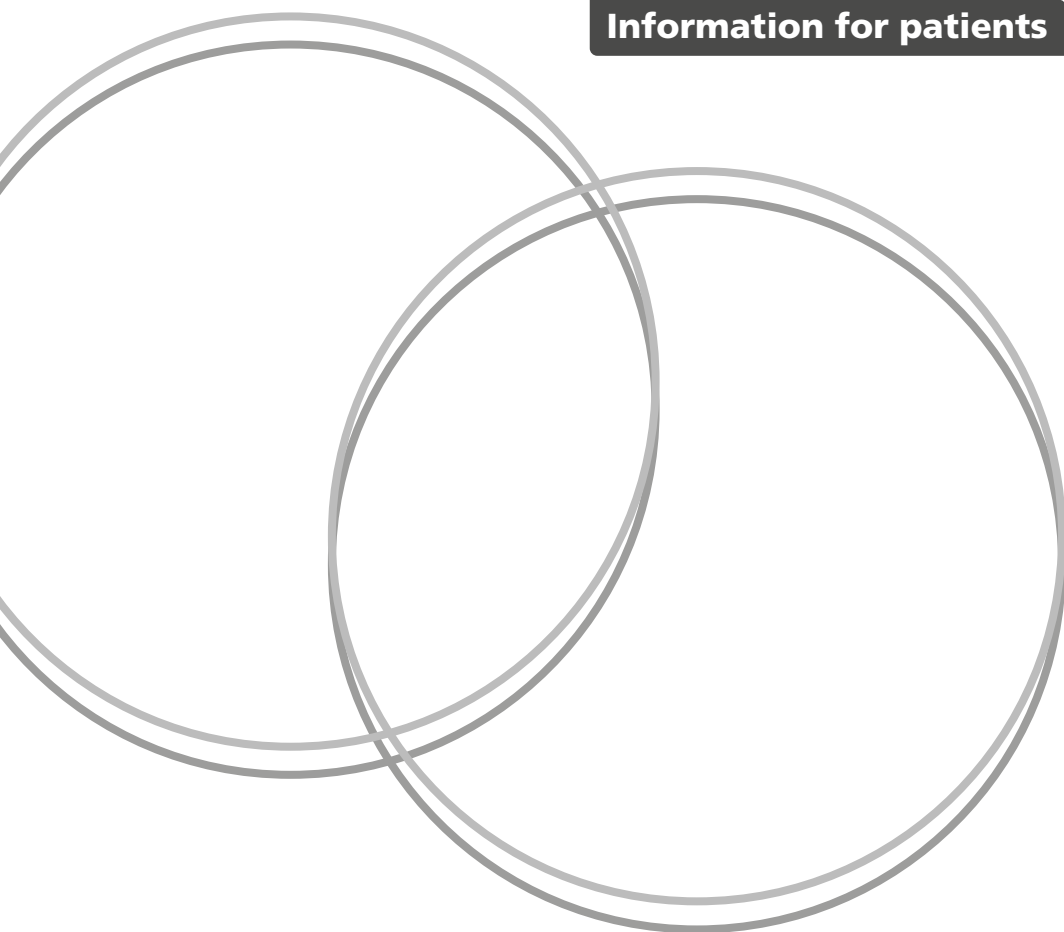


Managing Early Facial Palsy (Facial Weakness)

Information for patients



Speech and Language Therapy

What is Facial Palsy?

Facial Palsy is a term used to describe damage to the facial nerve, which causes weakness in the muscles of the face. One or both sides of the face may be affected.

Why does it happen?

There are lots of reasons why facial weakness may occur. The most common causes are:

- Infection
- Virus (such as herpes)
- Bacteria (such as Lyme disease)
- Trauma (pressure on the nerve after an operation, broken facial bones etc)
- Neurological (brain) conditions
- Surgery

These can cause a disruption to the signals sent by the facial nerve. These signals usually create movement and sensation in the muscles of the face.



Branches of the Facial Nerve

What can I do?

In the early stages, you can take some steps to support recovery. We recommend that you do not complete any exercises until you have been assessed by a Facial Rehabilitation Therapist.

Looking after your eye

- It is important to keep your eye clean and moist.
- Use drops or ointment as directed by your treating team.
- If blinking is difficult, you can use the back of your finger to gently close the eyelid.
- If your eye does not close at night, talk to your team about whether an eye patch or taping might be beneficial.



Looking after your mouth

- Brush your teeth regularly after meals.
- Use a lip balm or moisturiser to keep your lips moist.
- You may find softer food with extra sauce is easier to manage. Check your mouth for left-over food after eating. You may find it helpful to run a clear finger gently around the cheek and gums, or use a mirror to look inside your cheek after eating.
- If drinks are spilling from your mouth, you may find using a straw or a cup with a spout easier. You could also support your lower lip with a finger to help your lip to close around the cup or straw.
- Keep hydrated; regular sips of drinks will keep your mouth healthy and stop saliva from collecting.
- If you struggle with a dry mouth, there are specialist products available. Please talk to your Doctor or Health Professional for advice.

Looking after your face

It is important to massage your face regularly to keep your facial muscles stimulated. See the facial massage video on the Oxford Facial Palsy website for how to conduct your facial massage.

www.ouh.nhs.uk/services/departments/specialist-surgery/ent/facial-palsy/default.aspx

Additional Special Instructions:

Your Speech and Language Therapist is:

Name:

Telephone:

Should you have any concerns after your discharge from hospital,
please contact your Consultant or GP.

Oxford Facial Palsy Service,
LG1 West Wing,
John Radcliffe Hospital,
Oxford,
OX3 9DU

Telephone: **01865 231 085**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: Speech and Language Therapy Team and Oxford Facial Palsy Service

October 2025

Review: October 2028

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

