



Understanding the Facial Nerve

Overview

Learn a little more about the **facial nerve**, one of the 12 paired cranial nerves that starts in your brain.

The facial nerve

The facial nerve (*cranial nerve 7*) comes from your brain, and exits your skull near your ear. It runs below your skin and around the side of your face. You have one on each side of your face that coordinates **parasympathetic** (*rest and digest*), **sensory** (*feeling*), **special sensory** (*specialized sensations ex: taste*) and **motor** (*movement*) functions.

Parasympathetic function

The parasympathetic part of the facial nerve supplies salivary glands (*under your jaw and under your tongue*), mucous glands (*in your nose, palate, and pharynx*) and lacrimal (*tear*) glands.

Sensory function

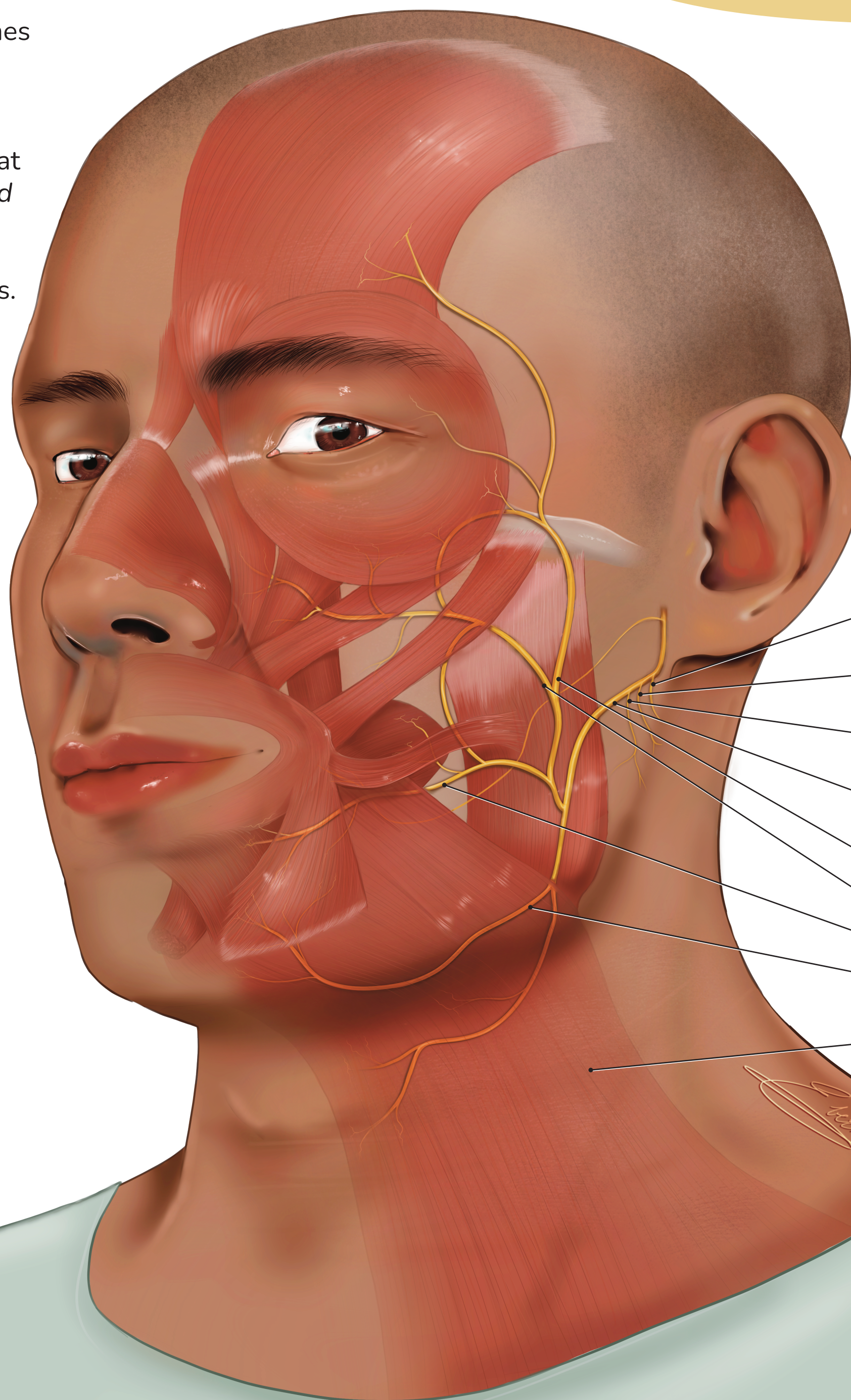
The sensory part of the facial nerve helps you feel around the edge of your outer ear (*concha*) and ear canal.

Special sensory function

The special sensory part of the facial nerve helps you taste on the front 2/3 of your tongue.

Motor function

The motor part of the facial nerve moves the muscles of facial expression in your face.



EXTRACRANIAL (outside the skull)

- Posterior auricular nerve
- Nerve to digastric muscle
- Nerve to stylohyoid muscle
- Facial nerve proper
Has 5 main branches:
- Temporal branch
- Zygomatic branch
- Buccal branch
- Marginal mandibular branch
- Cervical branch

Facial nerve branching



Everyone's facial nerve branches uniquely like a fingerprint but the general organization stays the same.

There are often interconnections between these branches making it a very complicated network of tiny nerves.

Muscles of facial expression

These muscles are controlled by the facial nerve and work together so you can show a wide range of emotions with your face.



FacialPalsyPath

Learn more about facial paralysis by scanning the QR code.

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