



Understanding Facial Paralysis

Overview

Paralysis is the inability to move the muscles you intend to. In the case of facial paralysis, this means the muscles in your face won't move as you want them to.

The facial nerve

The facial nerve (*cranial nerve 7*) runs below your skin and around the side of your face. You have one on each side that has motor (*movement*), sensory (*feeling*), special sensory and parasympathetic (*rest and digest*) functions.

The **facial nerve** has 5 main motor branches:

Temporal branch

Zygomatic branch

Buccal branch

Marginal mandibular branch

Cervical branch

Everyone has the same main branches, but the way they split and intersect is highly unique.

Injured nerves can sometimes grow back slowly at about **1mm** per day.

Causes

Facial paralysis is caused by injury to the **facial nerve**, this can happen when its compressed or damaged. Some examples of causes are:



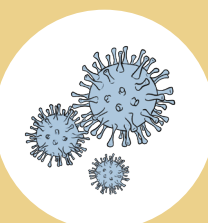
Trauma



Inflammation



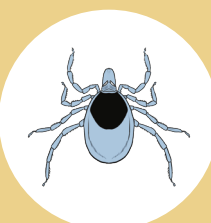
Stroke



Infection



Acoustic Neuroma



Lyme Disease

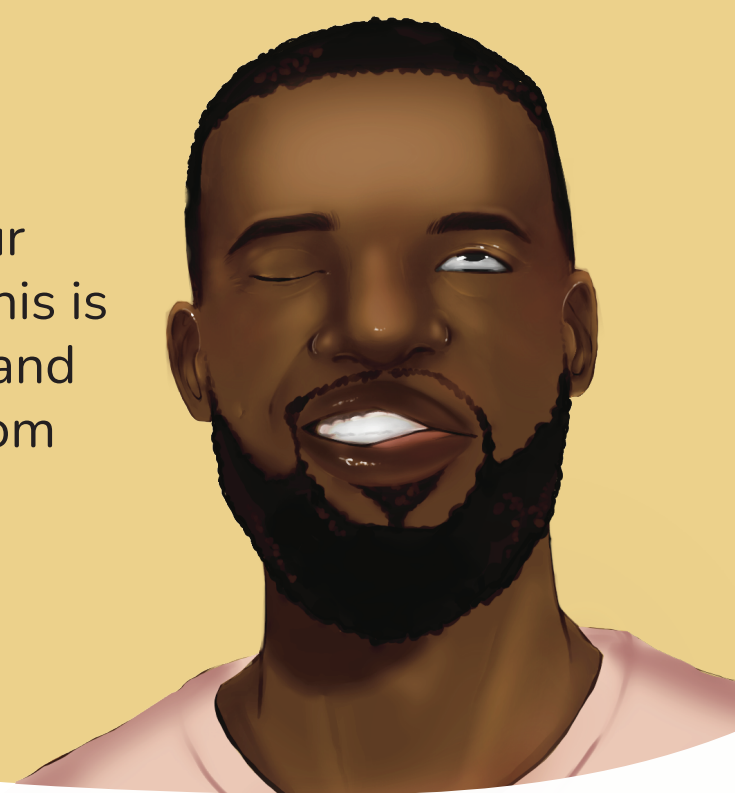


Cancer

Testing and medical history can help the doctor understand what is happening as well as help you figure out a path forward.

Bell's Reflex

When you close your eyes, it rolls back. This is called Bell's Reflex and protects your eye from dirt or wind.



Stages of facial paralysis

1 Flaccid (complete) paralysis

The signal from the facial nerve is not being sent to the face properly.

2 Recovering paralysis

The facial nerve can regrow slowly.

You may see symmetry improving with gradual increase in muscle strength. Focused muscle strengthening exercises can help.

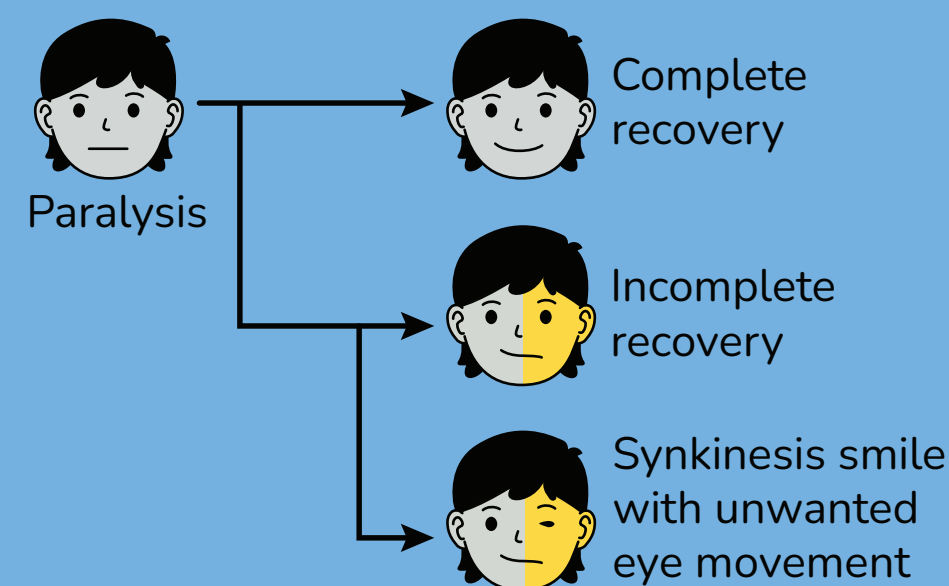
3 Incomplete paralysis

Despite some recovery, there might still be weakness at rest or with facial expressions.

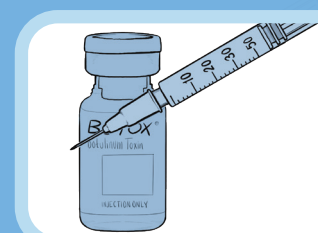
4 Synkinesis

If the facial nerve recovers, it can grow into the wrong pathways. This can link muscle movements together in an unintended way.

Synkinesis is **NOT** within your control.



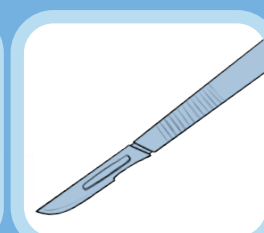
Synkinesis can happen anywhere in the face. It will not go away by itself, but interventions can help:



Neuromodulator



Physio



Surgery

Bell's Palsy

Bell's Palsy is the most common cause of facial paralysis and happens suddenly.

Most people see improvement after a few weeks but full recovery can take up to 1 year.



Everyone has a unique journey with facial paralysis and recovery is a process. Your care team is always there to support you.

FacialPalsyPath

Learn more about facial paralysis by scanning the QR code here.

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