

What is Facial Palsy:

Facial palsy is a result of the injury or trauma to the facial nerve. The main thing people notice is a lack of movement in their face, and this is because the facial nerve is responsible for activating the muscles that create facial expressions. It also is responsible for creating tears and saliva, the taste glands in the front portion of the tongue, movement of the small muscles in the ear responsible for dampening sound and sensation of a small portion of skin.

What causes Facial Palsy:

Facial Palsy is a result of several possible disease processes. The most common are:

- Bell's palsy
- Ramsay Hunt (reactivation of the chickenpox virus)
- Acoustic Neuroma
- Guillain Barre
- Congenital Facial Palsy
- Trauma

Why should I see a facial therapist?

In about 80% of the cases, symptoms resolve on their own within a few weeks, so there is a really good chance that everything will be fine whether you seek treatment or not. However, those weeks where you are waiting for the muscles to return can be challenging as you may have many questions and are trying to cope with an eye that won't close and a heavy face. A facial therapist has advice on how to make things more manageable while you wait for the muscles to return as well as provide you education about what is occurring and answer the many questions you have regarding what you are going through.

For approximately 20% of people, recovery can take longer and those affected may develop tightness or synkinesis (a form of 'faulty re-wiring' of the nerve) on their affected side. This can hinder appropriate and coordinated movement. A facial therapist can provide you with stretches and strategies on how to get those muscles to behave more appropriately and help you gain better movement in your face.

When should I see a facial therapist?

Whether you are newly diagnosed or have been living with the complications of facial palsy for years, the sooner you see a trained facial therapist, the easier it will be, but it is never too late.

What is involved in Facial Neuromuscular retraining treatment?

Treatment approaches will depend on what symptoms you are experiencing and where you are in the recovery process. Typically, therapy involves working to create facial symmetry as recovery is occurring and creating coordinated movement as muscles become reinnervated. For Facial Palsy, having a program that is specifically prescribed for you is very important. Inappropriate generalized exercise programs or use of modalities like electrical stimulation can result in long term complications.

Who am I?

I have 17 years experience as a neurological physiotherapist and have been working as a facial therapist for the past 6 years. For clients within the Greater Victoria area, I run a mobile physiotherapy clinic focusing on facial palsy, vestibular dysfunction, neurological conditions, TMJ disorders and concussion. I provide Telehealth appointments for Facial Palsy clients throughout British Columbia. I **prioritize seeing clients with new onset Facial Palsy and try to see them within a week of contacting me.**

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