



NON-SURGICAL THERAPIES FOR FACIAL MUSCLE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

When the facial nerve has been damaged, stretched by tumor growth or surgery, or affected by Bell’s palsy a temporary or possibly a permanent weakness may result. Sometimes the nerve may partially regenerate. Several self-administered therapies could help to preserve muscle bulk while awaiting nerve regrowth.

Exercises

Use a hand mirror regularly to check the position of the facial muscles during laughing, tense situations, and on waking will help you to be aware of the weak muscles. The muscles on the uninvolved side are controllable; the object is to keep them as relaxed as possible.

Exercises - Use a mirror to examine your face while you (perform these 3 times daily)

Wrinkle forehead	Open eyes wide	Open mouth, evenly drop jaw
Raise eyebrows	Squint eyes	Curl bottom lip
Scowl, draw eyebrows together	Balloon cheeks - slowly	Exaggerate a smile
Wrinkle nose	Hallow cheeks	Show teeth
Close eyes tightly	Pucker lips and whistle	Curl upper lip in sneer

Heat: Use mild heat- warm towels, a heating pad, or hot water bottle- to stimulate blood supply to the facial muscles 2-3 times daily. Also, gently massage the muscles on the affected side.

The weakness on the affected side may take weeks to months to recover (even up to 12 months). If there is no recovery in muscle movement after 6-12 months, call your doctor for another evaluation. There are many surgical techniques that can be performed that help to achieve symmetry of the face.