

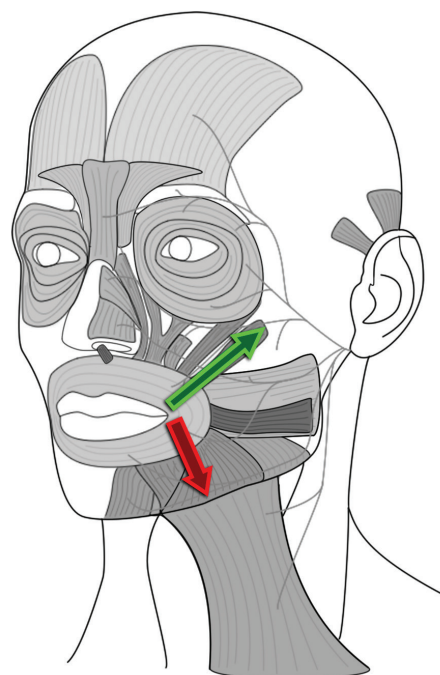
## Pre-operative Selective Myoneurectomy

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Background

Selective Myoneurectomy is a procedure for synkinetic patients. Its goal is to improve facial comfort, enhance the coordination of facial movement and reduce muscle tightness.

This surgery involves cutting some of the nerve branches to muscles that are causing synkinesis. By reducing the 'tug of war' effect from the pull of these muscles, the other muscles are able to work more effectively. This should lead to reduced synkinesis and improved less effortful movement. It should also improve the comfort within your neck and lower face by reducing muscle tightness there. It may improve the synkinesis around your eye.



#### Pre-operatively

You will discuss your suitability for this surgery with our multidisciplinary team, which consists of specialist facial therapists, psychological therapists and plastic surgeons. We will work with you to ensure that you are physically and psychologically ready for the surgery, and the post-operative rehabilitation. We will carry out a series of assessments before your operation and ask you to attend and have photographs and/or videos taken in the medical photography department.

You will also be seen by the nurses and anaesthetists in pre-assessment clinic to ensure that you are fit for surgery. Please feel free to ask questions at any stage of this process.

Prior to the offer of surgery, you should have been through extensive facial therapy. You will need to continue to do your daily facial stretches and other specific movement retraining work that you covered during your facial therapy up until your surgery.

**You will require pre-operative facial therapy – it is important to attend this otherwise you may not be able to proceed with your surgery.**

You should also have had several sessions of chemodenervation (Botulinum Toxin) to assess the effect of reducing the synkinetic muscle pull on your comfort, your smile and the synkinesis around your eye. This will give a short acting trial of the permanent effects of cutting the nerve branches.

Once you are on the waiting list for surgery, your chemodenervation will stop to ensure that there is no botulinum toxin within the muscle at the time of your operation. It takes 4-6 months to ensure that the effect of the botulinum toxin has worn off. It is essential that your facial muscles are not chemically relaxed as they will not respond appropriately to the nerve stimulator used to assess the extent of your

synkinesis during surgery, which enables your surgeon to reliably assess and cut the appropriate nerve branches. This could therefore affect the outcome of your surgery.

The facial therapy program that you will have undertaken before surgery will include massage, stretching and neuromuscular retraining. You must complete this or have come to a plateau of improvement before you progress onto surgery.

If you have any further questions regarding your surgery, please ask any member of the facial palsy team, who will be happy to clarify any information you are unsure of before your surgery. You will also have the opportunity to see your surgeon on the morning of surgery to ask any final questions. You can reach the facial palsy team on [qvh.facialpalsy@nhs.net](mailto:qvh.facialpalsy@nhs.net)

If you have not received an appointment for facial therapy before your surgery, then please call the therapy department on 01342 414004 or email [qvh.therapy@nhs.net](mailto:qvh.therapy@nhs.net)

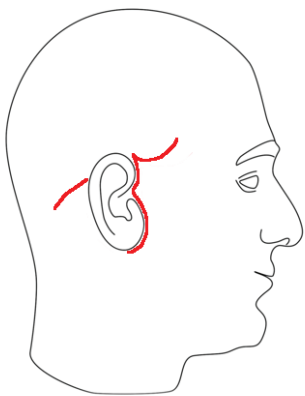
## What does the surgery involve?

This procedure involves your surgeon making an incision around your ear and separating the muscle, fat and skin to locate the nerve branches. The nerve branches are then tested using a nerve stimulator to identify the muscle they control. The nerve branches causing your synkinesis of the lower face are cut, and a strip of the platysma muscle is removed to ensure that the connection between nerve and muscle is lost.

## How long will I be in theatre?

This procedure will take approximately 3 hours in theatre due to the intricate nature of the nerve location procedure. In some cases, other surgical procedures occur at the same time and then this time scale might change.

It is imperative that you have not been on a long haul aircraft flight (more than 4 hours) for 4 weeks prior to the operation due to the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), and for 4 weeks after the operation to ensure optimal recovery and to be available for post-operative appointments.



## Will I have any scars?

With any surgical procedures, there will be scars. The scar position is designed to be hidden in your natural face contours to be less visible when healed.

## Will it be painful after surgery?

With any surgical procedure, there will be some pain. We will assess you before discharge to make sure you have adequate pain relief medication. You will experience a numb sensation over the area of skin that has been lifted and separated from muscle during the surgery. This is normal and will resolve over time.

## Will I have swelling after surgery?

- Your facial swelling will peak at around 3 to 4 days after surgery. You can help to reduce this if you sleep on your back, with your head raised on pillows, wear the facemask and apply arnica ointment post-operatively. We would advise using a wedge pillow, or a v-shaped pillow for comfortable positioning.

- For the first one to two weeks after surgery, you will need to wear this supportive facemask to reduce swelling. You should wear it day and night, except for bathing and eating (as required). During this time you should avoid lifting, bending and straining to allow post-operative swelling to settle and reduce the risk of any post-operative bleeding



- **Please note** that although uncommon, there is a risk of a sudden bleed over the front of the neck developing in the first week following surgery, which could result in pressure on your airway and make it harder to breathe. If you notice a sudden onset of new swelling, or are having any difficulty breathing, please call 999 or go to A&E, as this would need an emergency surgical review. Fortunately, this is rare, but it is for this reason that you will have an overnight hospital stay after your surgery, and receive laxatives for a one-week post-op, to avoid straining. It is imperative to avoid any neck stretches for one-month post-op.
- You will need to allow yourself time to recover after surgery and it is recommended that you allow around 2 weeks to rest and recover, and take this time off of work.

## What will happen after the operation?

### Immediately after surgery

- You will stay in hospital for approximately 1 day.
- You will have bandages, sutures and a wound drain.
- You will be able to get up and walk around on the day of surgery as long as you feel well enough.
- Once you are medically stable we have removed the drain and you are able to perform daily tasks safely, you will be able to return home.
- You will leave hospital with a face mask which you need to keep on day and night for the first one to two weeks, removing it only for short periods of time, e.g. for eating and personal care.
- Do not massage your neck or facial muscles until you have seen your facial therapist for a post-operative follow up appointment

### 2 weeks post-op

We will review your wounds in dressing clinic and remove any sutures (stitches).

## What is the therapy program after my operation?

You will have an appointment for facial therapy following your operation within a month of your surgery. If you do not have a therapy appointment **it is essential to call the therapy department on 01342 414004**, or email [qvh.therapy@nhs.net](mailto:qvh.therapy@nhs.net) to let us know that you have had your surgery and to arrange this.

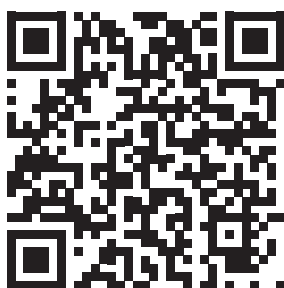
The surgery is not the complete answer to improving your facial expressions. You will need to work on the co-ordination of muscle movements, stretch out tight facial muscles, and relearn how to make gentle facial expressions. This may require a process of relearning and understanding how your face moves now, and learning to relax and lengthen muscles that have been used to working against your synkinesis. Your facial therapist will guide you through this.

We will schedule regular therapy sessions to assist you. Facial therapy will continue until you are able to manage and continue with your rehabilitation on your own. Your therapist will refer you for chemodenervation as required throughout your rehabilitation. Some people who had chemodenervation before their operation do not require it after this procedure, so this will be assessed on an individual basis.

## How long will the effects of this surgery last?

The aim of this surgery is to provide a permanent change to the extent of your synkinesis. The long-term effects of the surgery, and whether the nerve connection will re-establish itself, are currently under evaluation internationally. We expect long-term improvement in facial comfort and smile function with reduced synkinesis following this procedure.

We have compiled a patient experience video of interviews with patients who have had this surgery. If you would like to view this then please visit [please visit our video](#) or scan the QR code below.



**If you have any further questions, please ask a member of the facial palsy team.**

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit [www.supportqvh.org](http://www.supportqvh.org)

