

Post-operative Selective Myoneurectomy

Patient Information Leaflet

Your surgery was to reduce the 'tug of war' between the upper and lower facial muscles. The goal of surgery was to improve your comfort but with dedicated practice, we hope to improve your facial movement as well.

Early after surgery, you may feel a little sore around your ear and neck. When your wound has healed, gently massage your scar for approximately 5 minutes, twice a day, so that this does not become tight. You can also apply petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline) over your scar, which may improve the overall appearance of the scar in the long term.

You may have some numbness in your cheek and along your jawline, this is normal. During surgery the nerve endings that register sensation can be damaged and take several weeks to heal. It is important to start gently touching this area whilst the sensation is returning so your face does not become hypersensitive.

Two weeks onwards

You can now massage your face daily. You should not cause yourself any pain whilst doing this. Reduce the pressure from your fingers to a light touch if needed to make sure that you are comfortable. It is important that you do not stretch your neck until one month after your surgery.

At this stage, you should also re-start the stretching programme for your facial muscles that you were doing prior to your surgery. Initially after surgery, your cheek may feel tighter and look lifted. This is because the cheek muscles were used to working harder against the resistance of the downward pull from your synkinesis, which has now reduced. Without that downward pull, the cheek muscles 'ping up' and therefore need lengthening with a stretches and training in how to relax again. They can then start working more gently and effectively.

Your facial therapist will guide you through this programme and give you a muscle release handout designed specifically for you, but until you see them please continue with the releases from your pre-existing stretching programme.

Your facial therapist will also work with you on neuromuscular retraining for your smile. This will involve relearning the movement patterns, gentle coordination and muscle sequencing of smiling. At this stage, you need to learn to 'feel' the correct movement. Your facial therapist will give you muscle-retraining practices to follow that enable you to begin to develop a more confident smile.

You may still require chemodenervation (botulinum toxin injections) for other areas of your face as your rehabilitation progresses, but it is important to give your face time to readjust after the surgery before restarting this.

Releasing the facial muscles

The most effective way of knowing if a muscle requires stretching is to compare the flexibility of the muscles on both sides of your face. Start by feeling the unaffected side of the face first. If the affected side feels less flexible, thicker or stiffer then do slow releases for 1-2 minutes, or as many times, as required until it feels the same as the unaffected side. **Releases should always be pain free.**

At this stage of your rehabilitation, it is important that your brain is able to relearn what fully relaxed muscles and a relaxed face feels like, as prior to your operation it has been used to overactive, stiff and tight muscles. Once you have stretched your face spend a little while (e.g. 30 seconds) with your muscles totally relaxed, without any movement at all. Looking down, having your lips parted and your jaw relaxed can be helpful. Use this time to allow yourself to notice what relaxed feels like. You want your brain to learn this so that it can return your muscles to this position after activity, or if your face feels, strained or tired. This will help prevent your facial muscles getting gradually tighter again over time.

You may find this guided relaxation practice helpful [Calming Practice for the Face and Neck - Beth Jordan - YouTube](#)

This webinar – Managing the Psychological impact of a facial condition has valuable information about calming and relaxation practices too https://youtu.be/KHeZ1IzjM_g

Guide to muscle stretches

Green 'orbicularis oculi' muscle – closes the eye

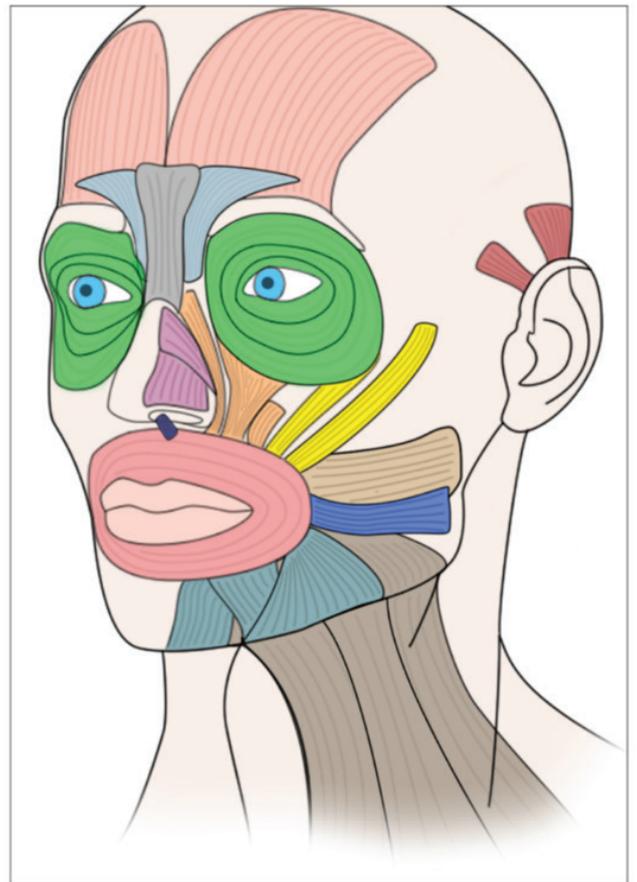
- Hold the eyelid closed with your index finger and stretch the brow up with the other hand. Hold for 1 minute.
- Put your index fingers next to the outer corner of your eye. Slowly pull the fingers apart (up and down) about 3 cm. Repeat for 1 minute.
- Repeat starting at the inner corner of the eye.
- Put your index fingers under the centre of the lower eyelid. Slowly pull the fingers apart (side-to-side) about 3 cm. Repeat for 1 minute.

Purple and blue nose muscles

- Gently squeeze the nose and then push slightly upwards. Hold for 1 minute.
- Put your thumb in your top lip and the index finger in the nostril and gently grip for 1 minute.

Orange 'levator' muscles – wrinkles the nose and lifts the lip into a sneer

- Place your thumb inside your mouth right up to your cheekbone with your index finger on the outside starting at the inner corner of the eye. Super slowly squeeze and glide the fingers down the side of the nose to the mouth repeating for 1 minute.
- If you find any thick tender spots, apply gentle grip pressure and hold this for 1 minute until that spot is completely relaxed ('melted').
- Repeat from the centre of the lower eyelid.



Yellow 'zygomaticus' muscles - smile

- Place your thumb inside your mouth and your index finger on the outside right up near the outer corner of your eye. Very slowly squeeze and glide the fingers down to the mouth repeating for 1 minute.
- If you find any thick tender spots, apply gentle grip pressure and hold this for 1 minute until that spot is completely relaxed ('melted').
- Repeat starting at the top of the cheekbone.

Brown 'buccinator' muscle – squeezes the inner cheek inwards and slightly back

- Place your index and middle fingers inside your mouth between your teeth and your cheek, facing outwards towards the cheek. Rest your knuckles against your teeth and make a hook with the tips of your fingers hooking the cheek out and slightly forwards. Hold for 1 minute.
- Slide the fingers (in their hook position) as far forwards toward the corner of the mouth as you can before they pop out of your mouth and hold here for 1 minute – you may feel a ridge here that will gradually release.
- Place your thumb inside your cheek and your fingers on the outside. Grip the muscle and slowly pull the muscle horizontally across towards the centre of your face.

Pink 'orbicularis oris' muscle – puckers lips, moving lips forward and in towards centre

- Place both your thumbs inside the centre of your top lip and your fingers outside gripping just above the lip line. Start with your thumbs together and pull one thumb slowly and gently out to the corner of the mouth repeating for 1 minute.
- Repeat on the lower lip but with fingers inside and thumbs outside.
- If you find any trigger points in the lips, grip gently for 1 minute to release them.