

### 7. Do not avoid oral care aids



Try not to avoid mouth rinses, even if you dribble on the affected side of your mouth. If it helps you can close your lips with help of your fingers to prevent dribbling. This will assist in adequate plaque removal and protect your oral health. Also, use floss or interdental brushes.

### 8. Do not avoid the affected side when eating

In everyday life, try to use your affected side just as much as your unaffected side when eating. Excessive strain on the unaffected side can lead to more wear and tear. In addition, one-sided chewing has negative effects on the jaw joint. To continue chewing evenly it is important to eat slowly with small bites.

### 9. Reducing dry mouth



If you suffer from dry mouth due to your facial palsy, you can wear a nasal dilator at night to minimise mouth breathing. This will reduce dry mouth and maximise intentional nasal breathing. You can also purchase specific dry mouth products to help reduce dry mouth, please speak to your pharmacist about these. We do not recommend using dry mouth gum as this increases the tightness of your facial muscles and can make your facial movement worse.

### 10. Regular visits to the dentist



Make regular visits to the dentist and hygienist. They will provide intensive preventative dental care, specific oral hygiene instructions and individualised oral hygiene training. It is recommended that you have your teeth professionally cleaned more regularly until they confirm you are maintaining good oral care at home despite the facial palsy.

## CONCLUSION

**It is important that you do not neglect your oral health after facial palsy as it is important for maintaining your general health.**

**With the tips mentioned above, you can prevent deterioration of your oral health despite facial palsy and maintain your oral health-related quality of life in the long term!**

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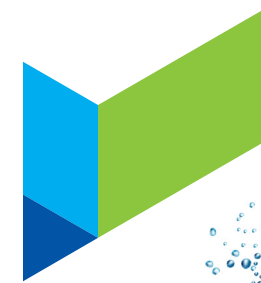


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**Maintaining good oral  
health despite facial  
nerve palsy!**

**Helpful tips for daily  
oral care**



**NHS**

**Queen Victoria Hospital**  
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## Dear patient(s),

Research has shown that due to the reduced muscle movement on the side of your face affected by facial palsy, you are more at risk of diseases developing within your oral cavity.

The reason for this is that more food residue remains on the surface of your teeth after eating, as the residue is less well removed by natural self-cleaning mechanisms such as targeted muscle movements of the cheek.

As a result, oral plaque stays on the surface of your teeth longer and attacks the structure of your teeth and gums. This can lead to an increased incidence of caries and periodontal disease.

For prevention, the following flyer provides you with 10 helpful tips and routines that you can integrate into your daily tooth brushing and thus quickly and easily maintain your oral health in the long term despite facial nerve palsy.

**Lisa Strobel**



## Tips for proper tooth brushing and long-term maintenance of oral health in chronic facial nerve palsy

### 1. Cheek stretching and cheek massage



Before brushing your teeth, place your thumb inside your affected cheek and the fingers of that hand on the outside of the cheek (opposite the thumb). It is easiest to use the opposite thumb (e.g., left thumb if you have right side facial palsy). Then grip and gently pull the cheek forwards and towards the other side making sure you don't cause any pain as you do so. Hold for 60 seconds then release. In addition, you can massage your cheek with your hands. This expands the space between your teeth and cheek and gives you more access to the outer surfaces of your teeth for better plaque removal, even in the back of the mouth.

### 2. Inflate cheeks

Gently inflating your cheeks before brushing has a similar effect. This creates more space and allows you to reach the back of your teeth with greater success. If blowing out your cheeks causes uncomfortable synkinesis, just stretch your cheeks passively, for example with your hands or toothbrush (see also 1, and 6).

### 3. Avoid clenching teeth

Clenching your upper and lower teeth together can cause more tension in the already stiff cheek and face. It is very important that, except when eating, there is always a little space between the teeth of the upper and lower jaw. Relax your teeth apart. Feel that the lower jaw is relaxed by its own weight. You can let the lips relax apart as well to help.

Concentrate on a relaxed face, first with the lips gently closed. Then relax the jaw, let it be 'heavy' so that the lips slowly part and the mouth falls open by its own weight. Next, slowly close the mouth again and let the lips rest gently against one another. Then relax the jaw, with the lips together in a relaxed way.

### 4. Consult a specialist facial therapist

In order to retrain facial movement and function correctly, it is important to work with a specially trained facial therapist. If you are not already working with one you may be able to find one via Facial Therapy Specialists International ([www.facialtherapyspecialists.com](http://www.facialtherapyspecialists.com))

### 5. Adopt a systematic brushing routine



Start brushing on the affected side of your face, for example, first in the upper jaw, then in the lower jaw. Then turn your attention to the unaffected side. This way, your affected side receives your full concentration at the beginning of brushing, as this side needs more support in removing oral plaque. However, adequate cleaning of your unaffected side must not be neglected either!

### 6. Intraoral massage with the electric toothbrush



Use of an electric toothbrush is recommended. It cleans the tooth surfaces more effectively and can remove more plaque, especially in the spaces between the teeth. You can also use your electric toothbrush for an intraoral massage of your cheek muscles at the same time. Simply run the brush head over your cheek from the inside for a rewarding massage effect.