

# FACIAL NERVE PROBLEMS AND BELL'S PALSY

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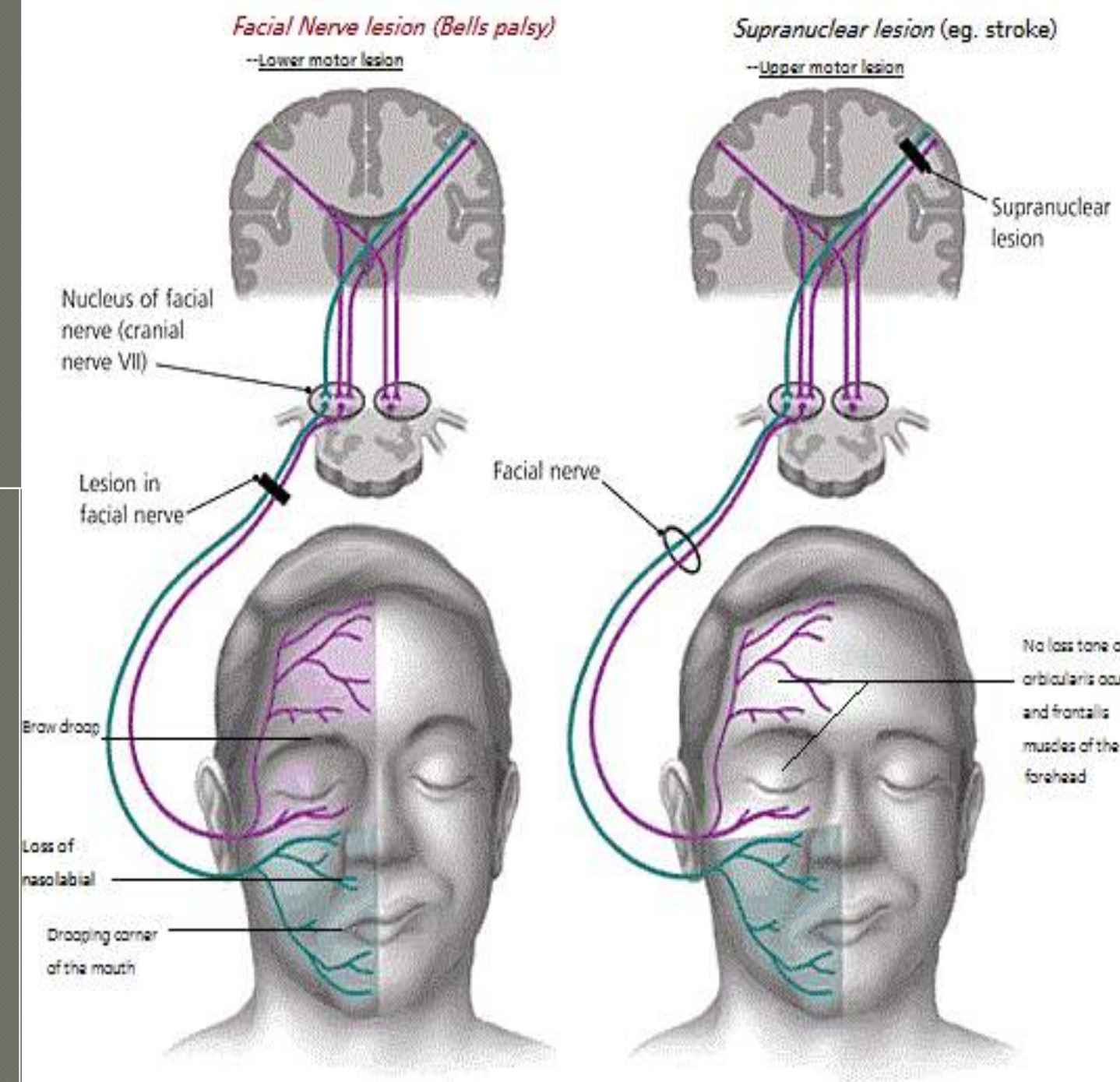
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## ABSTRACT

The facial nerve is a nerve that controls the muscles on the side of the face. It allows to show expression, smile, cry and wink. Injury to the facial nerve can cause a socially and psychologically devastating physical defect. Although most cases resolve spontaneously, treatment may ultimately require extensive rehabilitation or multiple procedures.

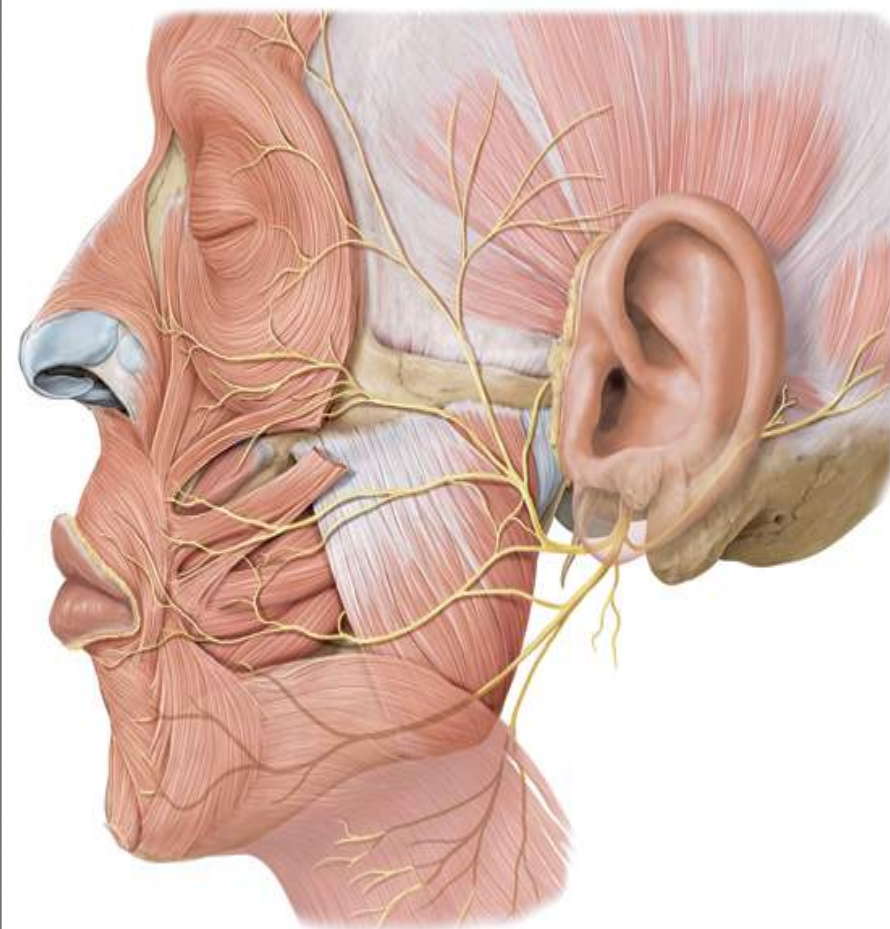
## SYMPTOMS

- facial pain
- headaches or dizziness
- earaches, tinnitus, sensitivity to sound
- difficulty talking
- inability to express emotion
- difficulty eating or drinking
- drooling
- muscle twitching
- tearing of the eye
- dryness of the eye and mouth



## TESTS

- **Hearing tests:** Hearing tests are done to assess the status of the auditory nerve. The stapedial reflex test can evaluate the branch of the facial nerve that supplies motor fibers to one of the muscles in the middle ear.
- **Balance tests:** Will help find out if part of the auditory nerve is involved.
- **Tear tests:** The loss of the ability to form tears may help to locate the site and severity of a facial nerve lesion.
- **Taste tests:** The loss of taste in the front of the tongue may help locate the site and severity of a facial nerve lesion.
- **Salivation test:** Decreased flow of saliva may help locate the site and severity of a facial nerve lesion.
- **Imaging studies:** These tests help determine if there is infection, a tumor, a bone fracture, or any other abnormality. These studies usually include a CT scan and/or a MRI scan.
- **Electrical nerve stimulation tests:** Stimulation of the nerve by an electrical current tests whether the nerve can still cause muscles to contract. It can be used to evaluate progression of the disease. For example, if testing indicates equal muscle response on both sides of the face, the patient can be expected to have complete return of facial function in three to six weeks without significant deformity



## CAUSES

- Bell's palsy
- skull fracture or injury to the face
- head or neck tumour
- stroke
- chronic middle ear infection or other ear damage
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- Lyme disease, a bacterial disease transmitted to humans by a tick bite
- Ramsay-Hunt Syndrome, a viral infection of the facial nerve
- autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, which affects the brain and spinal cord, and Guillain-Barre syndrome, which affects the nervous system

## TREATMENT

Most people with Bell's palsy recover fully — with or without treatment. There's no one-size-fits-all treatment for Bell's palsy, but your doctor may suggest medications or physical therapy to help speed your recovery. Surgery is rarely an option for Bell's palsy.

**Medications:** corticosteroids, antiviral drugs

**Physical therapy:** Paralyzed muscles can shrink and shorten, causing permanent contractures. A physical therapist can teach you how to massage and exercise your facial muscles to help prevent this from occurring

- **Eye lubrication**
- **Plastic surgery** - this can improve the appearance and symmetry of the face

## REFERENCES

1. Quinn FB. Facial Nerve Paralysis. Department of Otolaryngology 1996
2. Rath B, Linder T, Cornblath D. All That Palsies is not Bell's – The Need to Define Bell's Palsy as an Adverse event following immunization. Elsevier. 2007; 26: 1-14

