

Neurosurgery – Decompression of Facial Nerve

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS' ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by Clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Hemifacial spasm usually begins with a twitching around the eye that can progress into spasms affecting more muscles in the face and become more severe in nature. For some patients the condition is a source of embarrassing symptoms but for others it can affect vision and ability to drive. Generally speaking the condition is caused by a blood vessel compressing your Facial nerve and irritating it. We understand that you are waiting for an operation to decompress this nerve and hope the below information will help you during this period.

Guidance for Patients

We understand that hemifacial spasm can be very debilitating for patients. Prior to your operation there are treatments that can sometimes help to manage the symptoms in order to allow you to function more normally. We know that symptoms can sometimes be worsened by poor sleep and stress and therefore simple measures of relaxation techniques and good sleep hygiene [<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/>] can sometimes be effective in improving symptoms.

Anti-convulsant medications such as Carbamazepine and Topiramate can help to dampen the signal in the facial nerve and provide some relief of symptoms. Other medications such as Baclofen and Benzodiazepines can also sometimes help to provide some relief of symptoms. Your GP will be able to start one of these medications and help to titrate a dose to see if this will help and can advise if you are not tolerating a medication well.

Another pre-surgical option for management of this condition is Botox injections that can provide relief of symptoms for two to three months and begins to work after several days. Many patients find this very helpful in managing the condition. Your GP will be able to refer you for this treatment whilst you are waiting for an appointment with our team.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your symptoms are progressing rapidly and having a significant effect on how you live your life then you should contact your GP or ourselves using the details below in order for us to try to help facilitate a resolution. We understand that symptoms can progress and want you to feel well supported whilst you wait for surgery.

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

How can I prepare for surgery?

We also want you to be in the best possible place for surgery before you come in and therefore we would advise you to remain as active as possible leading up to your surgery. If you have any longstanding medical problems then please discuss these with your GP in advance of your operation to help put you in the best position to undergo surgery. Any loose crowns or toothache should be discussed with your Dentist. If you need help quitting smoking before your surgery then below are support services:

- Smokefree Bristol – Local stop smoking service (0117 922 2255)
- Smokefree – For help and advice on stopping smoking (0800 022 4332)
- <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking>

Good mental health

You may have been waiting for a long time for your surgery and this may take a toll on your resilience and wellbeing. Your GP would probably be your first contact if you feel your mental health is being impacted. They may be able to provide advice or information on local support. We will do everything we can to make sure your operation happens as soon as possible but in the meantime some links for different services:

- <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/mental-health-services>
- Normal Magic counselling services: <https://normalmagic.co.uk/>
- Mental health help: <https://www.betterhelp.com/>

Contact Us

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