

Facial Nerve Weakness: How to care for your eye

Normally, the eye is kept lubricated by frequent blinking throughout the day. Facial weakness can prevent the eye from closing fully and can cause eye dryness. This can lead to permanent damage to the cornea – a clear structure covering the colored part of the eye.

When you are awake, use eye drops

Eye drops are very good at keeping the eye moisturized. There are different types of eye drops, ranging from watery types to thicker gel types.

- Watery drops (artificial tears):
 - These are clear drops and do not obscure vision.
 - These evaporate quickly (within 10-15 minutes).
 - They come in two types: preserved and non-preserved. We recommend preserved eye drops since they are less expensive and the bottles can be re-used. If you are allergic to the preservative, then use the non-preserved type. They work just as well but cost more and come in single-use bottles.
- Thicker drops (gel-like):
 - These tend to last longer than artificial tears (1-2 hours).
 - These may make your vision a bit blurry, particularly at night when lights can produce a glare (when staring at headlights, for example).

We generally recommend thicker drops for regular use because they last longer. A good brand that can be purchased without a prescription is *Refresh Celluvisc*.

When you are sleeping, use eye ointment

Facial weakness may cause your eye to stay opened while you sleep. This can dry out the cornea. We recommend using eye ointment that will last longer and help protect the cornea from drying out and keep the eyelids shut. Two common brands are *lacrilube* and *duratears* (both sold over the counter on Amazon). To use an eye ointment, tilt your head back and pull out your lower eyelid to create a small pocket. Squeeze out a small ribbon of ointment into the pocket.

Do not use contact lenses if you have facial weakness

Use an eye-bubble or tape the eye when sleeping

We recommend using an eye bubble when sleeping. Eye bubbles also called eye moisture chambers can be purchased online. They are usually difficult to find locally. Below is an image of what an eye bubble looks like. If used properly, little droplets of moisture should form in the inner aspect of the plastic within 15 minutes.



Can be purchased here: <https://dryeyeshop.com/collections/bubble-bandages>

Alternatively, loosely fitting swimming goggles can also be used. These can be found at most sporting goods stores.

Eye Taping

If you are unable to use an eye bubble or goggles, another option is taping the eye at night when going to sleep.

We recommend using silicone tape.

Soft silicone tape can be found on Amazon or here: <https://dryeyeshop.com/collections/tapes>



Instructions: Do not apply lacrilube ointment before taping the lower eyelid as it may prevent the tape from sticking. Start by taping the lower eyelid in an upward vector by placing a piece of tape starting from the bottom of the eyelid on the side closest to the nose and taping it upward on the side closest to the ear. After the bottom eyelid is taped, it would be a good time to place the lacrilube ointment in the eye. Next, take another piece of tape, orient it vertically and start from the eyebrow and tape the lid down on the cheek. Carefully and gently remove the tape in the morning.

When to call the doctor

Your eye should be checked regularly by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist). They will evaluate your cornea with magnification. How often you have to see an ophthalmologist depends on the health of your eye.

If your cornea is injured, a corneal ulcer may develop. Corneal ulcers can become infected and can cause permanent vision loss if not treated properly. If your eye is persistently painful or reddened, you need to see an ophthalmologist right away.

Warning about pressure patches: There are healthcare providers not familiar with eye care in the context of facial weakness that sometimes recommend a pressure patch in the treatment of corneal ulcer. Pressure patches can cause further damage to the cornea and are not recommended.