

#### (1) Bell's Palsy

Bell's palsy is a form of facial paralysis resulting from an acute inflammation of the 7<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve and the cause is unknown. Studies have shown that this is likely to be associated with viral or bacterial infections.

#### (2) Common Symptoms

1. The condition is characterized by a one-sided facial droop, deviated mouth, difficulty in frowning and inability to close the eyelid thus causing dry eye. Due to facial muscle paralysis, food may be entrapped between the dentures and the cheek, causing drooling from one side of the mouth.
2. Patient may be sensitive to noises around, or having tinnitus, or pain in the lower jaw or behind the ear.

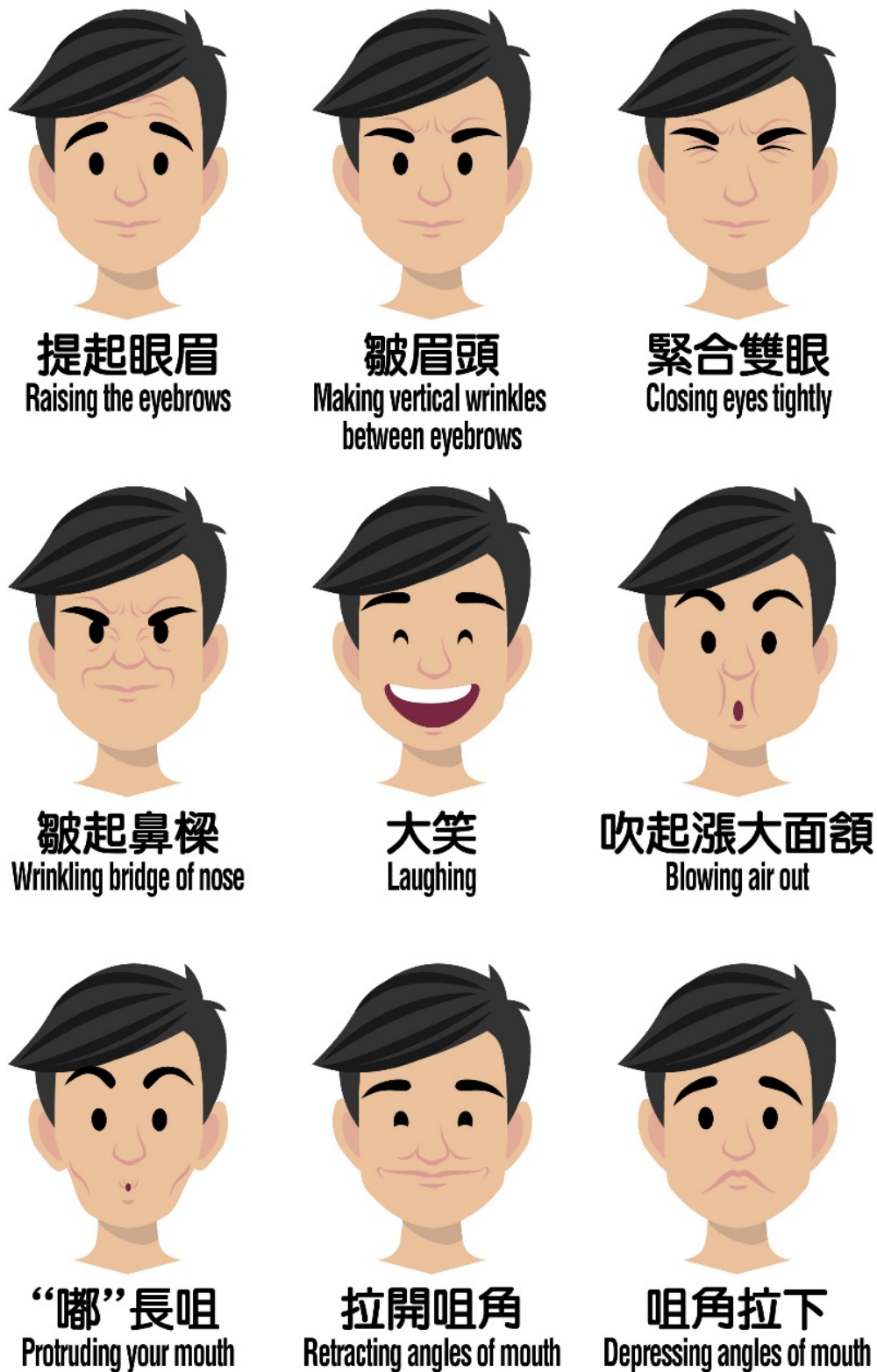
#### (3) Treatment

Initial treatment aims at reducing swelling, nerve protection and minimising damage. Steroid treatment (if no contraindications) will be prescribed as clinically indicated for about one week, during which the patient should take rest and stay relaxed. A small percentage of patients may have more serious symptoms and need 1-2 years to recover, or with some sequelae in some cases.

#### (4) Rehabilitative Care

1. Patient should have appropriate eye protection as inability to close the eye lid will cause dry eye, corneal abrasion and inflammation. Put on sunglasses in daytime and apply sterile gauze pads to cover the eyes at nighttime. Artificial tears (lubricant eye drops) or eye ointment can be applied regularly as prescribed to moist and protect the eyes.
2. Brush teeth and rinse mouth immediately after eating to remove food entrapped in the mouth for oral hygiene.

3. Have facial exercises (see figure 1) : stand in front of the mirror, wrinkle the forehead, inflate the cheeks and whistle, etc. to prevent muscular atrophy.



(Figure 1)