Can Bell’s palsy lead to non-flaccid facial palsy in Lyme disease?

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Can Bell’s palsy lead to non-flaccid facial palsy in Lyme disease? “Nonflaccid facial paralysis is a spectrum of hypokinetic and hyperkinetic movement,” wrote Markey and colleagues in the journal *Otolaryngology*.¹

Hypokinetic movement involves less movement, while hyperkinetic movement involves more movement.

“Clinically, this manifests as contraction of the orbicularis oris muscle simultaneous with eye closure or blinking and/or contraction of the orbicularis oculi during speaking or chewing,” explains Rubin in the *Handbook of Clinical Neurology*.² Orbicularis oris muscles are the group of muscles in the lips that encircle the mouth.

“Patients affected by NFFP often have a narrowed palpebral fissure, prominent and misoriented nasolabial fold, neck and face tightness, and mentalis dimpling,” writes Miller and colleagues in the *journal Facial Plastic Surgery & Aesthetic Medicine*.³ “These muscles can make a smile asymmetry.”

A narrowed palpebral fissure is a narrowing of the eye opening between the eyelids. Mentalis are the chin muscles.

Bell’s palsy can lead to NFFP in 15–30% of patients, writes Miller. “Other common causes of NFFP include Ramsay Hunt syndrome, acoustic neuroma resection, Lyme disease, trauma, autoimmune disease.”

Patients can suffer from NFFP with significant functional, aesthetic, psychological, and social impairments,” writes Miller.

To view photos of patients with both flaccid and nonflaccid facial palsy, visit "The spectrum of facial palsy: The MEEI facial palsy photo and video standard set."

**Treatment of nonflaccid facial palsy**

There is a wide range of treatments for NFFP including:

- Physical therapy
- Muscle relaxants
- Facial massage
- Acupuncture
- Myectomy
- Neurectomy
- Botox
Editor’s note: I have treated Lyme disease patients in my practice with nonflaccid facial palsy and have seen first hand the “significant functional, aesthetic, psychological, and social impairments” it can cause, as described by Miller.

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