Advice following Bell’s Palsy
What is Bell’s Palsy?
It is damage to the Facial nerve on one side of the face. The nerve runs through a small tunnel in the side of the skull, and leaves just behind the ear going to the skin and muscles that give us facial expression. Bell’s Palsy causes the facial muscles to weaken or become paralysed.

What causes the nerve to become damaged?
Damage is usually caused by a simple virus that makes the nerve swell and become red, hot and sore. The swelling puts pressure on the nerve, narrowing it and therefore stops signals to the muscles.
The symptoms of Bell’s Palsy come on very quickly, overnight or during one day, but occasionally it can take a few days. The degree of muscle paralysis usually peaks within several days.

Will the nerve recover?
This depends on how badly the nerve is damaged in the first instance. If only mildly bruised, as in most cases, it will recover fully within 6 – 12 weeks.
However, if the nerve is more severely injured, recovery may take up to one year, and actual recovery is unknown.

What can be done whilst the nerve recovers?

To protect the eye from becoming dry:
- Until you can blink fully, use the back of your finger to gently close the eye, and apply eye drops to act as artificial tears (these can be bought from a local Pharmacy/Chemist store).
- Take extra care to keep your eye moist while working on a computer as people tend to blink less frequently than normal while at a computer.
  Stinging or burning sensation can mean the eye is too dry.
- At night, close the eye with your finger and cover with a soft clean hanky. Use surgical tape over the hanky to keep it in place.
- Always remove the tape from the forehead downwards.
- Often the eye does not cope with intense light – wear tinted glasses / sunglasses in artificial light and when watching T.V.
- Avoid draughts getting into the eye, especially from the side.

To help prevent mouth sores:
- Ensure no food remains caught in the cheek of your mouth.

- Wash your mouth with warm water after eating.
- Try to chew food using both sides of your mouth.
If you have any problems with your dentures see your dentist.

Other helpful tips:
- When talking you may need to hold the side of your mouth to make it easier to form words.
- If sounds appear painfully loud, ask people to speak softly.
- Initially you may need to use a straw to drink but try to put it in the centre of your mouth and support the lips with a finger to help make a seal.
- Try not to emphasise movement to the good side of the face.
- Take plenty of rest if you feel tired as this helps to fight off the virus and aid healing.
- Mix with other people as soon as possible – it gets harder the longer you leave it.
- Don’t start exercising until there are visible signs that the nerve is starting to transmit signals to the muscles.
- Massage can be helpful.