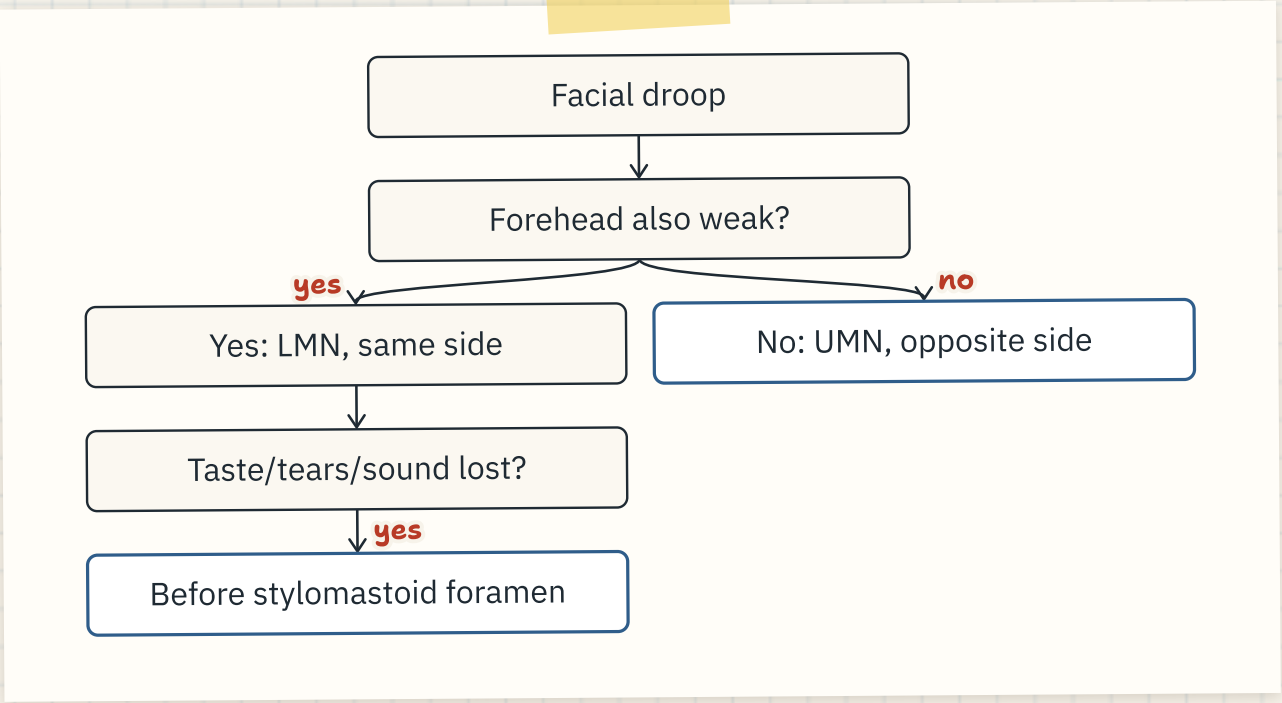
Facial palsy: UMN vs LMN

Use the forehead to place the lesion



Step by step

1. Is the forehead weak as well?
2. Spared: upper motor neuron, opposite side
3. Weak: lower motor neuron, same side
4. Check taste, tears and loud sound
5. Any lost: proximal to stylomastoid foramen

	UMN	LMN
Face weak	Opposite lower face	Whole half, same side
Forehead	Spared	Weak
Reason	Forehead has bilateral input	Only supply lost

Upper versus lower motor neuron facial palsy

Forehead rule

Forehead = both hemispheres

Lower face = mainly opposite hemisphere

Exam traps

- Do not call a whole-face palsy upper motor neuron: the forehead is weak in a lower motor neuron lesion.
- Normal taste, tears and hearing with a whole-face palsy put the lesion at or beyond the stylomastoid foramen, unless brainstem signs point to the facial nucleus.
- The rule is classic; sensitive grading can show milder upper-face weakness in stroke.

Facial nerve palsy: why the forehead tells you the lesion

Video, written lesson, practice question and sources: medservatory.com/usmle-step-1/neuroanatomy-localisation/facial-nerve-palsy-upper-vs-lower-motor-neuron

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