



Sensation after Surgery

- As indicated on the consent form, altered sensation of the lip, chin, teeth, or tongue (including taste) can occur following ANY dental or surgical procedure, even after an injection of local anesthesia. Sometimes, Dr. Koos can identify a higher-risk area that may be prone to this type of injury beforehand, but this can also occur in virtually any situation.
- If you experience a continuation of numbness or a tingling sensation beyond the normal 10-12 hours that the anesthetic should be effective, then it is important that you inform Dr. Koos immediately. The condition can be sometimes improved by the use of some medications started within 72 hours of the procedure.
- This sensation can be caused by teeth in close proximity to the nerve, unusual anatomy of the nerve in the area of the third molars, pathology (cysts or tumors) in close proximity to the nerve, implant placement, or chance in the case of injections. The level of altered sensation is often your doctor's best guide to the type of nerve injury sustained.
- There is a range of altered sensation possible, and examination of the affected area often helps in diagnosis and determining your prognosis. The most common injury, a bruising or concussion of the nerve is called a **neuropraxia**. With this injury, there is no damage to the physical continuity of the nerve, and recovery is often rapid and complete within days to several months.
- The next type of injury, called an **axonotmesis**, is a more severe bruising, pressure injury, or stretching of the nerve. Some of the nerve fibers may break down beyond the point of the physical injury, causing a more prolonged alteration in sensation. This kind of injury often can heal by itself but takes many months, and the final recovery can be variable.
- A complete separation of the nerve is called a **neurotmesis**, and is the most severe of all nerve injuries. Dr. Koos will be able to immediately identify this during surgery and will inform you. In these cases, spontaneous recovery of sensation is unlikely unless the nerve is repaired surgically. In general, the quicker the repair is undertaken, the more recovery one can expect.
- Sensation returns first at the point closest to the injury, and gradually returns to areas further away. The sensation/perception of light touch and direction detection is often the first to disappear with an injury and the last to reappear. Response to deep pain is the last to go and first to return.
- ***It is very important for you to follow up with Dr. Koos as directed.*** He may test different areas over time and several appointments to determine if your sensation is returning. Often, improvement in sensation that is not obvious to you can be detected and measured by your doctor. In the rare case of a complete nerve separation or altered sensation with unusual pain, you may be referred to another doctor specializing in nerve microsurgery to reconstruct your nerve. This generally needs to be done within six months to give the best chance of recovery.

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