



Post-Operative Instructions: Paresthesia

Oral surgery, like any surgery, has risks that can occur despite the best of care. You may remember discussing these risks before surgery. One risk we discussed was the possibility of a change in sensation of the lip, chin, gums, and/or tongue. This change in sensation is called paresthesia, and it requires close follow-up care.

What causes paresthesia?

The nerves that give sensation to the lip, chin, gums, and tongue are very close to where your surgery was performed. When these nerves are disturbed during surgery, they may not function normally. It is important to note that these nerves affect sensation only, not movement. Therefore, you may feel numb, or your food may taste different, but the affected areas should move normally. You should be able to smile, speak, and chew as usual. Your appearance will not change. The affected area may feel distorted, but it is not.

How long will paresthesia last?

The duration of paresthesia is unpredictable. It may last days, weeks, or months, or in rare cases, it may be permanent.

What is the treatment for paresthesia?

Paresthesia usually gets better by itself over time. You may notice tingling or other sensations while your nerves are repairing. On the other hand, your sensation may return so gradually that you might not be aware of any improvement. It is possible that all or some of your sensation will return. However, nerve repair surgery, if performed in a timely manner, is sometimes an option for extreme cases of paresthesia. If you decide to have nerve surgery, it is recommended that you consult with a nerve surgery specialist (micro-neurosurgeon) and have treatment between 2 months and 6 months following the onset of your paresthesia to have the best chance of a successful nerve repair.

It is very important for you to keep all of your follow-up appointments so that we can evaluate your progress and develop the best treatment plan for you. During your follow-up appointments, we will perform tests that will enable us to monitor your nerve response and document any changes in the area affected. It is by monitoring changes in your symptoms over time that we can advise you of your prognosis and best treatment options. Your failure to return for regular follow-up care may prevent us from helping you regain your sensation to the best possible extent.

In Closing . . .

We hope that this addresses some of the concerns you may have about paresthesia. We know that paresthesia can be upsetting, and we want you to understand your condition so that we can work together to develop the best treatment plan for you. If you have any questions or concerns at all, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to seeing you at your next scheduled appointment so that we can work together for the best possible result.