

PARESTHESIA AFTER LOCAL ANESTHETIC

Local anesthetics are used to provide a temporary prevention of pain to allow dentists to keep a patient comfortable during a dental procedure. Should the effects of the local anesthetic last longer than is considered normal, the result is a persistent anesthesia referred to as paresthesia.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What is paresthesia?*

- Normal sensation returns to your mouth when the anesthetic wears off.
- Paresthesia refers to a prolonged loss of or altered sensation.

2. *What are some of the causes of paresthesia?*

Local anesthetics are considered to be generally very safe. However:

- During an injection the needle may cause trauma to the sheath around a nerve.
- An increase in pressure on a nerve may occur due to bleeding associated with trauma to the nerve sheath from the needle.
- Oral surgical procedures can be a rare cause of paresthesia.

3. *How can paresthesia be prevented?*

- By strictly using proper care and protocols such as using oral landmarks and precise techniques, there is little risk of paresthesia when local anesthetic is given.
- However, whenever a needle is inserted into soft tissue to deposit a drug such as a local anesthetic as close to a nerve as possible without actually touching it, there is always going to be a risk of contact with that nerve.

4. *What should I do if I think I have paresthesia?*

- It is important to report any painful sensation in the tongue, lips or any other area of your mouth that may occur.
- Usually you will notice that you are still a little numb the day after your dental procedure.
- However, if you notice some unusual prolonged side effects which may include swelling, tingling, itching, tongue biting, loss of taste and possible speech changes, you might have cause for concern.
- You should arrange an appointment to be seen and examined by your dentist.

5. *How is paresthesia managed?*

- Your dentist will determine the degree and extent of the paresthesia.
- Paresthesia may persist for at least 2 months before it starts to resolve, and may occasionally last up to a year. Your dentist will want to observe you during this time frame and may possibly refer you to a specialist.
- You can continue having dental treatment but avoid having local anesthetic given in the affected area.