Post-operative Paraesthesia Resulting from Lingual and Inferior Dental Nerve Injuries in Lower 3rd Molar Extractions

The third molars are commonly referred to as the wisdom teeth. Their failure to erupt into the mouth often causes infection in the gums and food trap leading to decay, pain and swelling. Their extractions are indeed the most common surgeries performed by the dental surgeons. In our Dental Center, more than 50 wisdom teeth are removed daily!

One of the risks of wisdom teeth surgery is the potential injury to the lingual and/or inferior dental nerves. The lingual nerve provides sensation (including taste) to the tongue whereas the inferior dental nerve provides sensation to the chin, lower lip and teeth in the lower jaw. Injury to these nerves can result in the temporary or permanent, partial or full loss in sensations in the areas supplied by these nerves.

The degree of risk is in part dependent on the anatomical location of the nerves in relation to the wisdom tooth. A clinical examination with Xrays is necessary to provide an indication to the potential of such injuries and the patient fully informed prior to the surgery.

The figures below show the quarterly rates of paraesthesia experienced by our patients following wisdom teeth surgeries. The incidence as compared with that in other studies, has been encouraging and kept constant at less than 1%. A reduction in the incidence may imply an improvement of surgical technique. On the other hand, an increase in incidence may also mean an increase in the complexity of cases presented in the clinic. The percentages thus have to be read with caution. It reflects the findings on the first week post operation and it is heartening to know that more than 90% of these cases have sensations fully restored after 3 months.
Post-operative Paraesthesia (Mental) of Lower 3rd Molar Surgery by Department of Dentistry, KTPH