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Taste alteration after impacted mandibular third molar surgery**Melika Sadat Mortazavi**

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The extraction of lower third molars is one of the most frequent surgical procedures in Dentistry. Among the more relevant risks associated with this operation are the injury of the peripheral somatosensory branches of the trigeminal nerve, mainly that of the lingual and inferior alveolar nerves. The taste impulses initiated in the anterior area of the tongue are transmitted to the medulla oblongata through the gustatory fibers that are first integrated in the lingual nerve, branch of the mandibular division of the trigeminal nerve. After passing through this nerve they leave to form part of the chorda tympani, branch of the facial nerve. Due to the anatomical course of the lingual nerve, the gustatory fibers are in close proximity to the lower third molar, near the mandibular lingual cortical plate, making this area especially susceptible to surgical trauma. It is possible that some gustatory fibers arising from the tongue also reach the brain stem through the mandibular branch of the trigeminal nerve. The presence of this alternative pathway may explain the reported cases of unilateral loss of taste after sectioning the root of the trigeminal nerve.

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