



What to Ask Before Your Dental Surgery

When administered and monitored by an anesthesia team led by a well-trained and highly skilled surgeon, all levels of sedation, up to and including general anesthesia, may be safely, comfortably and predictably provided to patients undergoing an office-based dental surgical procedure.

As with any surgery, however, it is essential that patients, as key members of their healthcare team, take an active role in their treatment choices and ask the following questions before selecting a dental specialist and office for their procedure.

1. What are the dental provider's qualifications?

Any dental procedure that requires general anesthesia is surgery and should be performed by a surgeon specifically trained in its administration and use. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons complete a minimum 4-year, hospital-based residency following dental school, during which they train alongside anesthesiology residents on the anesthesia service. Throughout their residency they hone their anesthesia skills in both hospital and outpatient surgical settings.

2. Who will monitor me while I am under anesthesia?

The oral and maxillofacial surgery anesthesia team is comprised of the surgeon and two well-trained anesthesia assistants who routinely work and train together to continuously monitor the patient's vital signs during and after surgery.

3. Is the staff trained to respond to an anesthesia emergency?

While anesthesia emergencies are rare, it is important that, like the OMS anesthesia team, the dental specialist and attending staff regularly work together and train as a unit to respond and treat emergencies quickly and appropriately. Many OMS assistants have completed the rigorous Dental Anesthesia Assistant National Certification Examination and have Basic Life Support certification. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons maintain current Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Pediatric Advanced Life Support certifications.

4. Is the dental specialist performing the surgery a full-time member of the practice where the surgery will be performed?

Surprisingly, this is a serious concern. Sometimes the dental specialist will work for several practices – moving from office to office when surgeries are scheduled. In such instances, the specialist may not have a working relationship with the office's assisting staff, may be unfamiliar with the location and use of the office's emergency equipment and drugs, and may have limited knowledge of the nearest hospital and emergency medical teams.

5. Is the dental office equipped to handle an anesthesia emergency?

Should an anesthesia emergency occur, it is vital that the dental office have the necessary equipment and drugs immediately available for the surgeon's use. Unlike dental offices that do not perform surgery regularly, oral and maxillofacial surgery offices are well provisioned to meet any unexpected situation. All oral and maxillofacial surgery offices undergo a regular Office Anesthesia Evaluation to ensure the staff is trained to respond to emergency situations, the equipment is in excellent working condition and that rescue drugs are current.

Remember, as an important member of the healthcare team, patients should always tell their surgeon about:

- Healthcare concerns on the day of surgery, including flu-like symptoms, dizziness, etc.;
- Chronic medical conditions, including diabetes, liver or kidney disease, and heart conditions;
- All the medications you take, including nonprescription drugs, nutritional supplements and recreational drugs; and
- Whether they have had any food or water prior to surgery.

General anesthesia used during an office-based surgical procedure performed by an oral and maxillofacial surgeon provides patients with a safe and comfortable experience and an excellent outcome. Patients are urged to advocate on their own behalf and investigate their options before scheduling their dental surgery.