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Sore throat, hoarse voice and your teeth

> **The short version.** A sore throat, a husky voice and a dry mouth are the most common complaints after a general anaesthetic — roughly one in three people notice them. They usually settle within a few days. Tell me beforehand about loose teeth, crowns, bridges or dentures.

Why it happens

To breathe for you during the operation, a soft plastic tube is placed through your mouth into your windpipe, or a mask is held over your face. Both involve some contact with the throat and voice box. The tube is inflated with a small cuff to seal the airway, which presses lightly on the lining of the windpipe. Add a dry mouth from the medicines and from fasting, and the result is the familiar scratchy throat.

What to expect

- A sore or scratchy throat, worse on swallowing, for one to three days.
- A hoarse or croaky voice, usually improving within a few days; occasionally up to a week.
- A dry mouth, cracked lips, or a slight taste change.
- Sometimes a mild cough, or a tickle when you take a deep breath.

What helps

- Lozenges, warm drinks, honey and lemon, and simple pain relief such as paracetamol.
- Rest your voice for a day if it is hoarse — whispering strains it more than speaking quietly.
- Keep fluids up; a dry throat feels much worse.
- Lips and mouth: lip balm and water.

Your teeth

Damage to teeth is uncommon but it does happen, most often to a tooth that was already loose, capped, crowned or badly worn, or to a denture. Tell me before the operation about anything that is loose, any crown or bridge, dentures or a plate, orthodontic work, or a history of difficulty with previous anaesthetics. I will plan the technique around it, and where there is real risk we will discuss it with you first.

> **Contact us if:** the sore throat is severe or getting worse after three days; you cannot swallow fluids at all; you have a fever; your voice has not returned after a week; you have difficulty breathing or a noisy breath; or a tooth has been chipped, loosened or lost.

On your phone: anaesthesia.herman.au/p/8

Scan to read on your phone

Prepared by Dr Herman Lim for patients of his anaesthetic practice · version 1.0, 27 November 2026.

There is no college position statement on airway-related sore throat; this sheet reflects standard practice. Dental assessment and pre-existing damage are covered in ANZCA **PG07 (2024)** and **PG29(A)** for children. This pamphlet is general information and does not replace individual advice. If my rooms, your surgeon or your hospital have given you different instructions, **those instructions take priority** over anything written here.