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General Anesthesia

General anesthesia is safe and common. Anesthesiologists are specialist doctors who have undergone many years of training to perform this procedure. Your treating anesthesiologist will discuss what they believe is the best way to care for you during your procedure.

They'll discuss with you what their plan for the anesthetic involves and answer any questions you have. After you've changed into a patient gown, you'll have an intravenous line placed by one of the nurses in the preoperative areas, and monitoring put on.

When the room is ready for you, you will be taken to the operating room. A routine safety briefing discussion with all of the people involved in your operation will occur.

You'll be asked to breathe on an oxygen mask before you have your anesthetic. Your anesthesiologist will then give you medication through your intravenous line that makes you unconscious for your procedure. After you are asleep, they will place a breathing tube. Depending on the procedure you are having, they may place extra intravenous and monitoring lines. They will stay with you the whole time during surgery to make sure you are safe and comfortable.

When the operation is over they will take you to the recovery room where you will be carefully looked after by specialist recovery nurses. They will ensure you are comfortable before you go to the ward or go home.

You will have an opportunity to ask questions you have any prior to the procedure.

While we have asked you to review this information, your anesthesiologist will review their plan for your care with you on the day of surgery and discuss any risks that are relevant to you. We have outlined some of the risks of general anesthesia below.

Side Effects of General Anesthesia





Very Common

These side effects happen to more than 1 in 10 people. This is equivalent to one person in a family.

Sickness (Nausea and Vomiting)
Shivering
Thirst
Sore Throat
Bruising
Temporary memory loss (mainly in those over 60 years of age)



Common

*These side effects happen to between 1 in 10 and 1 in 100 people.
This is equivalent to one person in a street*

Pain at site of injection
Minor lip or tongue injury



Uncommon

*Between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000
This is equivalent to one person in a small village*

Minor nerve injury



Rare

*Between 1 in 1000 and 1 In 10 000
This is equivalent to one person in a small town*

1 in 10 000 people
Severe allergic reaction to a drug (Anaphylaxis)

1 in 4500 people
Damage to teeth requiring treatment

1 in 2800 people
Scratch on eye (Corneal abrasion)

1 in 1000 people
Peripheral nerve damage that is permanent



Very Rare

1 in 10 000 to 1 in 100 000 people.

This is equivalent to one person in a large town or city

1:100 000 people

Death as a direct result of anesthesia

1 in 20 000 people

Awareness during an anesthetic

1 in 100 000 people

Loss of vision

This publication includes text taken from the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) leaflet 'Common events and risks in anaesthesia 2019' but the RCoA has not reviewed this as a whole"



Induction of anesthesia

Photo credit: The American Board of Cosmetic Surgeons

Survey

This is a pilot project that aims to offer patients useful and accessible information about their upcoming anesthetic. We value your feedback and anticipate the website will expand over time! Please fill out the survey after reviewing the material. Your response is completely confidential and in no way will change the care you receive in hospital.

