

Fact Sheet

Anaesthesia and day surgery



What is general anaesthesia?

A general anaesthetic is a mixture of medicines that put your child into a deep sleep during which they will not be aware or feel pain. The doctor who gives your child the general anaesthetic is called an anaesthetist.

How safe is anaesthesia?

These days, anaesthesia is very safe, although there is always some risk of problems occurring during anaesthesia and surgery. The risk of death from anaesthesia alone is far less than the risk of death from a road accident. Your anaesthetist is an experienced doctor trained to deal with complications.

Why does my child need to fast?

It is important for anyone having an anaesthetic to have an empty stomach. If your child has food or excess liquid in his or her stomach when anaesthetized there is a risk it could be vomited and breathed into the lungs.

Fasting usually means no solids or milk for six hours before anaesthesia. Your child may drink enough clear fluids to satisfy their thirst, such as water, lemonade or apple juice up to two hours before anaesthesia. Small babies and breast-fed babies may not need to fast as long. The day surgery staff will advise you of the appropriate fasting time for your child.

Does anaesthesia have any side effects?

Most children recover from anaesthesia quickly and without problems. Some children may feel grumpy, have a sore throat or feel sick. Nausea and vomiting are relatively common and may be caused by the anaesthesia or the surgery or both. The vomiting is rarely severe or persistent. Let your child eat and drink when they feel like it - do not force them to eat or drink. Contact your hospital if:

Your child continues to vomit frequently i.e. is not keeping anything down.

OR

If your child is still vomiting for more than 12 hours after the operation.

Will my child be in pain after the operation?

If your child is in pain after the operation, a simple pain reliever like paracetamol may help control the discomfort.

During the operation, one or more of the following may be used to help control the pain for the first few hours:

- Paracetamol.
- Local anaesthetic to numb the area which has been operated on.
- Stronger pain relieving drugs.

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Even with adequate pain relief, some children are upset after an operation. Fear, anxiety and hunger all contribute to this distress. Try to stay calm and comfort your child.

Children's painful procedures and operations (fact sheet)

http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/painful_procedures_and_operations.htm



Children's Pain - the facts (fact sheet).

<http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/pain.htm>



If you have any questions about pain relief, ask your child's anaesthetist.

Remember

- Anaesthesia is very safe. There is only a small risk of complications.
- Follow the day surgery staff's advice about fasting.
- Your child may vomit after the operation, but this usually stops within a few hours.
- Please discuss your concerns with your child's anaesthetist.



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

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the children's hospital at Westmead

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