

PATIENT INFORMATION: ANAESTHESIA

You have made the decision to have the surgery that has been recommended by your surgeon. To assist in this process you need to know about your anaesthesia choices.

Who is the Anaesthetist?

Generally people view the anaesthetist as the one who will “put you to sleep” for the operation. It involves much more than that. The practice of anaesthesiology requires more than administering anaesthesia. It involves patient care during and immediately after an operation. An anaesthetist must have special knowledge in such medical fields as pediatrics, cardiology, obstetrics and intensive care medicine.

Type of Anaesthesia

There are several types of anaesthesia. The type that you will receive will depend on the nature of your surgery, your health, medical history and your own concerns and preferences. If there is a choice you may be asked for your preference but the anaesthetist will make the final decision about the type of anaesthesia that is best for you.

GENERAL

In a general anaesthesia your entire body and brain are anaesthetized. You are totally unconscious. General anaesthesia is used for many types of surgery. The patient has no awareness, feels nothing and will be unlikely to

remember anything of the surgical experience. When you arrive in the operating room an intravenous will be started (if you don't already have one) and IV anaesthetics may be administered which will allow a rapid and comfortable induction of anaesthesia. Along with intravenous medication the anaesthetist may possibly administer, through a mask, anaesthetic gases which will assist in keeping you asleep. A tube will be placed in your throat to ventilate through during your surgery. When you wake up, the tube will be out but you may have a slightly sore throat for one or two days.

REGIONAL

In regional anaesthesia you may be awake but relaxed and comfortable. There are a few types of regional anaesthesia:

- Spinal anaesthesia – you will remain awake and alert while the anaesthetist injects anaesthetic into the fluid-filled sac surrounding the spinal cord. The injection will be given to you while positioned on your side or sitting up. The skin around the injection site will be frozen for you so that the injection should be painless.
- Epidural anaesthesia – involves an injection into the tough connective tissue covering that protects the spinal cord. The doses of anaesthetic can be regulated so that the pain

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signals are blocked and the patient remains in some control of muscle movement. A small plastic tube remains in place throughout the procedure so more medication can be added for epidural anaesthesia.

- Nerve Blocks – used to anaesthetize a certain part of the body i.e. arm, leg, hand by delivering anaesthetic directly to the appropriate nerves, i.e. Ring Block.
- IV block - will anaesthetize an arm or leg, by an anaesthetic agent being injected into a vein in which circulation has been blocked by a tourniquet.
- Local infiltration – where local freezing is injected in and around surgical site. This will be done by your surgeon.
- Conscious sedation – often used in combination with local infiltration, it is IV medication injected to relax you while the surgeon does your surgery.

Pre-op Clinic

You may be required to attend our pre-operative clinic. At this time anaesthetic risks will be assessed pertinent to your surgical and medical history and an appropriate anaesthetic will be decided upon. Please be aware that you may see an anaesthetist on behalf of our Anaesthesia Department. This may not be the same anaesthetist who administers your anaesthetic the day of your surgery. You will also meet a peri-operative nurse. The nurse will check your weight, your vital signs, explain

what will happen on the day of surgery and will answer any questions that you may have. At this time you may be required to have blood work, electrocardiogram (EKG) and a chest x-ray done. Please bring with you to pre-op clinic a list of all medications that you currently take including herbals as well as any questions you may think of, pertinent to your surgery or recovery.

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