

## When You Need Anesthesia

### What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia is the use of medicines which cause loss of feeling or consciousness. The drugs are given by an anesthesiologist. These drugs will cause you to feel no pain during your surgery.

### Who are anesthesiologists?

Your anesthesiologist is a doctor who has advanced training in anesthesiology. He or she will be with you during all of the procedure. He or she will go with you to the recovery room when the surgery is over.

Anesthesia and surgery affect your entire system. It is important for your anesthesiologist to know as much about your medical history as possible. You will meet your anesthesiologist just before your surgery. At that time, your anesthesiologist will review your entire medical chart. He or she will understand your needs, medical conditions and medical history.

### What are the types of anesthesia?

There are four main types of anesthesia. They are general, regional, local and procedural sedation. **You, your surgeon, and anesthesiologist will determine which is best** for the surgery you are having and your medical history.

- With **general anesthesia**, you will be unconscious and have no awareness of the surgical procedure. You will not feel any pain.
- With **regional anesthesia**, your anesthesiologist will inject medication to numb only the area of your body that requires surgery. You will not feel any pain. You may remain awake, but often you will be given a sedative to make you more comfortable during surgery.
- With **local anesthetic**, a medicine will be injected into the skin and tissues to numb a specific location.
- With **procedural sedation**, you will be conscious during your procedure, but you may not be aware of what is happening. You will not experience pain or anxiety.

### What does the anesthesiologist do during surgery?

Your anesthesiologist is responsible for your comfort and well-being before, during and after your surgery. In the operating room, the anesthesiologist will give your anesthesia and manage vital functions. These include heart rate, blood pressure, heart rhythm, temperature and breathing. He or she will monitor the anesthesia so that you will be comfortable until your anesthetic care is completed.

### What can be expected after surgery?

Your anesthesiologist continues to be responsible for you in the recovery room, often called the post anesthesia care unit (PACU). There the anesthesiologist directs specially trained registered nurses who monitor your condition and vital signs as the effects of the anesthesia wear off. You are then released from the recovery room.

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## Questions and Answers

**Q. What about eating and drinking before my anesthesia?**

A. You should follow the instructions of your surgeon and/or anesthesiologist.

**Q. Will I need someone to take me home?**

A. Yes, if you are not going to be admitted to the hospital, you must make arrangements for a responsible adult to take you home after your anesthetic or sedation. You will not be allowed to leave alone (such as in a taxi) or drive yourself home. You must be escorted home by a person over the age of 18. It is strongly suggested you have someone stay with you during the first 24 hours.

**Q. Should I take my usual medicines?**

A. Some medications should be taken and others should not. It is important to discuss this with your surgeon.

**Q. What should I wear?**

A. Wear loose-fitting clothes that are easy to put on and will fit over bulky bandages or surgical dressings. Leave all jewelry and valuables at home.

**Q. Will I have any side effects?**

A. The amount of discomfort you experience will depend on a number of factors, especially the type of surgery. Your doctors and nurses can relieve pain after your surgery with medicines given by mouth, injection or numbing the area around the incision. Your discomfort should be tolerable, but *do not expect to be totally pain free*. Nausea or vomiting may be related to anesthesia, the type of surgical procedure or postoperative pain medications.

**Q. When will I be able to go home?**

A. This will depend on the type of surgery and the anesthesia used. Your surgeon and anesthesiologist will determine whether you can go home or if you must stay in the hospital. Many patients are ready to go home shortly after surgery. Your anesthesiologist will be able to give you a more specific time estimate.

**Q. What can I expect after I go home?**

A. If you are not admitted to the hospital, you will finish your recovery at home. You may experience drowsiness and minor after-effects following anesthesia. This may include muscle aches, sore throat, occasional dizziness and headaches. Nausea also may be present, but vomiting is less common. These side effects usually decline rapidly in the hours following surgery but may take several days before they are gone completely. The majority of patients do not feel up to their typical activities the next day, usually due to general tiredness or surgical discomfort. Plan to take it easy for a few days until you feel back to normal. A period of recovery at home is common and to be expected. Resume your medications as instructed by your surgeon.

**Q. Will there be a separate bill for the anesthesiologist?**

A. Your anesthesiologist is a physician specialist like your surgeon or internist, and you will probably receive a bill for your anesthesiologist's professional service provided to you. This is separate from the bill you will receive from the hospital.

**Many people are apprehensive about surgery or anesthesia. If you are well-informed and know what to expect, you will be better prepared and more relaxed. You will have a chance to ask questions and discuss any concerns with your anesthesiologist prior to your surgery.**