

Before your operation

When you come into hospital an anaesthetist from our department will come to visit you.

We will ask you about:

- your health
- what medicines you take
- other operations you have had.

We will discuss with you:

- the best type of anaesthesia for your operation
- the best type of pain relief for after your operation
- any worries you may have about anaesthetics.

It is not safe for you to have food or drink in your stomach during an operation in case you vomit during surgery. For this reason you are not allowed food, sweets, milk and drinks other than water for six hours before surgery. We would encourage you to drink water up to two hours prior to your procedure to keep you hydrated. If you are having a morning operation, you must not have any breakfast. If you are having afternoon surgery, please eat breakfast but make sure it is finished by 7am. Chewing gum is not permitted on the day of surgery.

Types of anaesthetic

1. General Anaesthetics

You are unconscious. You feel and see nothing. We will normally inject anaesthetic drugs into a vein in your arm to send you to sleep. After that we will keep you asleep either with anaesthetic gases and oxygen or continuous injections in the vein in your arm. We stay with you throughout your operation. As soon it is over we will stop the drugs so that you wake up.

2. Local Anaesthetics

We inject local anaesthetic drugs around nerves which makes the area of the operation numb. Surgery will not start until this happens. We also sometimes give you sedation.

3. Sedation

We inject drugs into a vein in your arm to make you relaxed. You will be able to talk to us and tell us how you feel. After your operation you will be taken to the recovery room. Recovery staff will stay with you at all times. When they are satisfied that you have recovered from your anaesthetic, they will send you back to the ward.

Frequently asked questions

Will I be asleep?

Your anaesthetist will ensure you are unconscious if you are having a general anaesthetic. Surgery will not start until you are asleep.

Will I wake up at the end?

As soon as your anaesthetist switches off the anaesthetic drugs you will start to wake up. This is done when the operation is over.

Will I be in pain?

It is normal to experience pain after surgery. We will help you with painkilling drugs and local anaesthetic injections. The type of pain relief you get will depend on the surgery you are having. There is a leaflet on the wards, telling you about the types of pain relief that are available.

It also depends on how well you were before the surgery. Losing weight (if you are overweight) and stopping smoking before your operation will help you to recover more quickly.

Side effects of anaesthetics

Common side effects after general anaesthetics include a sore throat, bruising and soreness, itching, sickness, dizziness and confusion.

Uncommon side effects following general anaesthetics include damage to teeth or lips, breathing problems and chest infections, an existing medical condition getting worse and awareness (becoming conscious during your operation).

Rarely: damage to nerves, equipment failure or a serious allergy to a drug may occur. Death caused by anaesthesia is very rare and is normally caused by a combination of complicating factors.

How quickly will I get back to normal?

Again this depends on the type of surgery you have and how well you were before the anaesthetic. Losing weight (if you are overweight) and stopping smoking before your operation will help you to recover more quickly.

Further information

If you have any worries about your anaesthetic, discuss them with your anaesthetist. It may be useful to write down any questions you have and bring them with you to hospital. We hope this leaflet has helped you to understand your anaesthetic and look forward to meeting you.

If you have any more questions, please phone the Anaesthetic Department on 01206 742349 or visit this website:

www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo

Verifying your identity

When you attend hospital, you will be asked to confirm your first and last names, date of birth, postcode and NHS number if you know it, and to let us know if you have any allergies.

Introduction

This leaflet was produced by the Anaesthetic Department at Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust in order to give you information about anaesthesia prior to your operation.

When you come into hospital your anaesthetist will visit you before your operation.

What is an anaesthetist?

Anaesthetists are doctors with specialist training in anaesthesia. Some anaesthetists also have specialist training in intensive care medicine and the management of chronic pain.

We will:

- explain the types of anaesthesia available to you
- discuss the risks of anaesthesia with you
- be with you throughout your operation
- look after your pain relief after your operation.

Before coming into hospital

If you know you need an operation, you can help us before you come into hospital by:

- trying to stop smoking. Smoking can cause breathing problems whilst you are anaesthetised. Cutting down the number of cigarettes will help if you cannot stop completely
- trying to lose weight before your operation if you are overweight. Being overweight increases the risk of complications during surgery and whilst you are anaesthetised
- visiting your GP to discuss long-standing medical problems such as diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure or angina.

Consent

By law we must obtain your written consent before any operation and some other procedures. Staff will explain all the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of your treatment, please do not hesitate to ask to speak to a senior member of staff.

Identification wristbands

Wristbands are used to identify hospital inpatients. When you are in hospital it is essential that you are given and wear your wristband, which carries your name, date of birth, NHS number and hospital number. This ensures that staff can identify you correctly and give you the right care.

Comments, compliments or complaints about your care

Please raise any concerns in the ward or department you are in. Ask to speak with the ward sister, matron or department manager. If your concerns cannot be resolved or you wish to make a formal complaint, please call PALS (Patient Advice & Liaison Service) on 0800 783 7328, pick up a PALS leaflet or visit www.colchesterhospital.nhs.uk/pals.shtml

Your views

If you or a family member has recently been in Colchester General Hospital, you can tell us about your experience by searching for 'Colchester' on the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk), by writing to the address on the front of this leaflet, by emailing your comments to info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk or by filling in a 'Friends & Family' questionnaire at the hospital.

Anaesthesia before your operation

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Please ask if you
need this leaflet in
an alternative format

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