

All you need to know about your General Anaesthetic

Information for your safe and
comfortable treatment

Call centre opening hours

Monday - Thursday
8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday
8.30am - 4.30pm

Tel: 0333 405 0290

(Smile:Together)

Tackling oral health inequality for
healthier happier communities

Why do I need a general anaesthetic?

This has been advised by your dentist as the best way for you to manage your dental treatment.

What is a general anaesthetic?

It means you will not be awake for your treatment and will not feel anything.

Are general anaesthetics safe?

All medical procedures, including anaesthetic have some risks. Please ask your dentist or dental nurse if you have any concerns. The hospital team are fully trained and experienced to keep you safe and cope with any complications that may arise.

Can someone stay with me while I go to sleep?

Yes, it is essential to bring a family member or friend to support you. They will not however be allowed in the theatre.

Why do I need to be weighed?

We need to weigh you so that your anaesthetist knows how much anaesthetic medicine to give you.

How will I go to sleep?

There are two ways. The best way is for the anaesthetist to place a cannula (plastic tube) into a vein on the back of your hand. The medicine is then put into this and you go to sleep. The other way is for you to breathe gas and oxygen through a mask, this will gradually send you to sleep.

What about the numbing cream on my hands?

You will have been given some numbing cream and special plasters. The cream is placed on the back of both hands (over the veins) about 60 minutes before your appointment. The clear film plasters hold it in place. **Do not rub it in** and remember to take the green grid off, then put gloves over this.

Why do I need to wear gloves?

To make sure that your hands are warm, which makes it easier for the anaesthetist to see the vein and put the cannula in.

What happens when I wake up?

You will be lying on a bed with recovery nurses looking after you. You may feel dizzy and uncomfortable. You will also have a clear plastic mask over your mouth and nose to give you some oxygen. As you wake up the nurses will call your parent or carer to sit with you.

When can I go home?

When you can stand and walk on your own, the recovery nurses will give you instructions and tell you when it's safe to go home. You must go straight home by car, unless you have agreed other arrangements with the dental team.

What happens when I get home?

You must follow the written instructions given to you by the nurse about looking after your mouth and recovering from a general anaesthetic. You should plan to have the next 24 hours at home, being looked after by a responsible adult.

How soon can I have something to eat and drink?

As soon as you like, taking care not to burn or bite yourself.

Why shouldn't I eat or drink before my general anaesthetic?

If you have food or drink in your stomach, you might be sick and this could be dangerous, therefore:

No food, sweets or chewing gum and no formula or cow's milk for 6 hours before appointment time

No breast milk for 4 hours before appointment time

Still water or dilute squash should be given up until 1 hour before the appointment time

Please give your child a glass of still water or dilute squash 1 hour before the appointment

Will my mouth hurt afterwards?

You may feel uncomfortable and your mouth may become numb as part of your treatment. We will give you some painkillers at the hospital if needed, but you should also have some available at home.

How else will I feel afterwards?

You may feel:

Tired, dizzy and unsteady for a few hours after the treatment

Some general discomfort for a few hours

Sometimes, people may feel sick

Have a numb mouth (from a local anaesthetic to make you more comfortable). This feeling will go away within two to four hours

Occasionally, have a mild sore throat

Have a bruised hand (this is uncommon)

May have an itchy nose

Risk and safety

What are the risks?

Risk cannot be removed completely. When a patient is fit and healthy, the risk of a life-threatening problem is approximately 1 in 350,000. This risk is considerably less than that of being seriously injured in an accident.

Are there any additional risks for people with medical problems?

Everyone is different. You will have been carefully assessed to identify your needs before your operation. Treatment and safety precautions will be adapted to any special requirements you may have.

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