

What is Anesthesia?

It is the painless state brought about by various drugs. It is used during many medical procedures, such as surgery and childbirth.

No matter what type of surgery you have, you want to know that you will be safe and comfortable. A highly trained doctor (anesthesiologist) or a specially trained nurse, (CRNA) supervised by the anesthesiologist, makes sure that you are safe during your surgery. He or she also directs your care right after surgery.

Types of anesthesia:

- 1. Monitored anesthesia Care:** this is often used for surgery that is short or does not go deep into the body. Sedatives (medications to relax you) or painkillers or a combination of both may be given through an IV line. You may choose to be awake or sleep lightly.
- 2. Regional Anesthesia:** is often used for surgery involving the arms, legs, or abdomen or during childbirth. Part of your body is numbed by injecting anesthetic near your spine or near nerves in your arms, neck or legs. The region will begin to feel numb in a few minutes. You may also be given sedatives to relax you.

Spinal: The spinal column has a tunnel on its back part that runs through its entire length. Inside this tunnel runs the spinal cord, from the bottom of your skull to just below your waist. Nerves come from and to the spinal cord all along its length. These nerves carry signals to the brain.

A “spinal” involves giving a local anesthetic next to the nerves that leave the spinal cord. When the anesthetic touches a nerve coming off the spinal cord, the sensation of pain and the ability to move the muscles below that area are no longer present. The anesthesiologist can control how long that will last by using drugs that wear off at different lengths of time. When the operation is over, your movement and feeling will gradually return to normal.

In the operating room:

- You will be given some medication to make you feel drowsy
- You will have some fluids started in your veins (this will be done before you come to the operating room)
- You will have blood pressure and heart monitors attached to you
- You will be asked to sit on the edge of the operating room table or lay on your side. In either case this position is just temporary and helps the doctor to perform the spinal.
- Your back will be washed with an antiseptic soap, it will be very cold, the area will be draped with sterile towels
- A very tiny needle will be used to inject some anesthetic into the skin to make it numb
- A extremely thin needle will be used to inject less than a half of a teaspoon of medication right near the spinal nerves.
- In about 5 minutes your feet and buttocks will feel tingly and “fall asleep”

This same procedure will be used for placing an epidural catheter. (used for childbirth)

3. General Anesthesia: is used for major surgery, such as heart, chest, brain, or abdomen or when the patient wants to be fully asleep. This type of anesthesia is usually obtained by giving medications into the IV line that is already in place. There are several types of medications used; **hypnotics** that allow you to go to sleep and wake up quickly and comfortably; **narcotics**; that relieve pain these are often used together with the other drugs; **sedatives**, are sometimes given even before you get to the operating room.

You could receive some **gas anesthetics**, these are breathed through a mask into the lungs. They act quickly and cause you to go to sleep. They also leave the body quickly so their effects don't last long. You will most likely have a mask placed over your nose and mouth while you are still awake. Oxygen will be given through this mask until your anesthetic is given.

General anesthesia requires a breathing tube be put in through your mouth and down your throat to breathe for you until your operation is complete and it is safe to wake you up. **You will be completely asleep before this breathing tube is placed. You will not know this or remember that it took place.**

Before your Procedure:

The anesthesiologist will talk to you before surgery. He/She will discuss risks and possible complications of anesthesia depending upon your general health. **Depending on your health, certain types of anesthesia may be preferred or necessary to reduce the likelihood of complications.**

You may be required to have some testing before your surgery. This may include blood work, x-rays or an EKG. You may be asked questions about your medical history and about what types of medicines you take at home.

You will be asked if anyone in your family has ever had any problems with anesthesia in the past. ***Be sure to mention if you, a parent, or a sibling has had any problems with anesthesia in the past.***

Do Not eat, drink or smoke or take certain medications, supplements or other remedies for the specified time before surgery.

You should have someone to drive you home from the hospital the day of discharge.

After Surgery: When your surgery is over you will be taken to the post anesthesia care unit, (recovery room) where specially trained nurses will monitor your blood pressure, heart and oxygen saturation, body temperature. They will give you pain medicine to make you comfortable. You may be in the recovery area for an hour or so.

When you are awake and your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing are normal you will be sent back to the One Day Surgery Unit or to the nursing unit for the duration of your stay. If you go to the nursing unit all of your clothes and belongings will be taken to your room by the One Day Surgery Staff. Your family will be informed of your room number and will be told when you are back in your room.

The anesthesia providers are key members in your healthcare team. They are specialists in the area of anesthesia. ***They will use your medical history; type of procedure and test results to determine what type of anesthesia is the safest for you.***