



SURGERY PATIENT INFORMATION

How does general anesthesia affect me?

When you are under an anesthetic, you are not asleep; the drugs used during anesthesia “turn off” the brain so that you cannot feel pain. Once you are unconscious, your brain cannot control your body’s vital functions. This means that the anesthesiologist has to take over control of things like breathing and blood pressure for you.

How long does it take to wake up?

When the operation is finished, you will be taken from the operating room to the recovery room. Here, the nurse and the anesthesiologist will look after you until you have recovered from the anesthesia. It takes a few minutes to wake up, but you may remain drowsy for some time. You will stay in the recovery room until most of the effects of the anesthesia have worn off (usually an hour, sometimes longer).

How will I feel when I wake up?

Different people have different reactions upon awaking from anesthesia. For many, ordinary sounds will seem louder than usual at first. Also, you may wonder where you are and may have some pain at the surgical site. Again, different people react differently and to different degrees, so reactions not listed above are possible.

Why do I need the oxygen mask?

The oxygen helps flush out the anesthetic gases from your body. *Do not take off your oxygen mask.* If you remove it too soon, you may get a headache or may even become confused. Usually, oxygen is necessary only for a few minutes. Do not take the oxygen mask off until a doctor or nurse says it is safe for you to do so.

Why is the nurse asking me to take deep breaths?

As you are waking up, the nurse will call you by your name and say “Your surgery is over; take some big, deep breaths and move your legs.” These deep breaths are especially important if you are a smoker. You may want to practice the following exercise prior to your surgery:

- ❖ Take a deep breath to gently fill your lungs.
- ❖ Hold the air in while you slowly count to 3, and then let the air out.
- ❖ Repeat this sequence 3 times, and then rest.

Why should I move my legs around?

After an operation, it is important to try to move your legs around in order to help prevent the formation of blood clots. If blood clots form in the big muscles of your calves or thighs, they

can cause very serious complications that could delay your discharge from the hospital. Your nurses will ask you to move your legs and wiggle your toes to help keep blood flowing through your legs until you are up and walking around.

How much pain should I expect?

The amount of pain you experience will depend on a number of factors, including the type of procedure you had. The anesthetist has several ways of controlling your pain in order to help keep you comfortable. In many cases, the anesthetist or nurse will give you something to help relieve pain before you wake up. You will be asked to rate your pain on a scale of 1 to 10. Be honest when you answer, as this will help the anesthetist and/or nurse determine the best way to treat your pain.

Will I feel sick and/or vomit?

Today's anesthetic drugs are much better than those of a few years ago, and only a few patients vomit following surgery under anesthesia. If you do feel sick, queasy, or nauseated, tell your nurse immediately, as there are medications that may help.

What is the intravenous drip (IV) for?

You will have an IV in your arm. The IV is used to administer medications to you and also allows the anesthetist to give you special fluids to help your kidneys flush the anesthesia drugs from your system.

Can I catch a disease such as HIV/AIDS or hepatitis during my surgery visit?

Each patient gets brand new sterile needles, syringes, and drugs, so there is no chance that you will catch **any** disease from these supplies.

Why can't I drive myself home/When will I be able to drive?

Many of the effects of anesthesia do wear off after a few hours, but it generally takes a day or more for all of the effects to wear off. During this time, your reaction time may be a great deal slower than normal. For this reason, you will be told that you are not allowed to drive a car, operate machinery, or engage in any other activity that could be hazardous for at least 24 hours after your surgery. Also, you should not make any important or legal decisions or sign any important/legal paperwork during this time period.

What about my teeth, dentures, caps, crowns, bridges, and/or other dental work?

When waking up from anesthesia, some patients grind their teeth and bite their lips. It is not possible to stop you from doing this. The anesthetist will use a special mouth guard to help prevent this, but sometimes, teeth still get chipped, crowns and other dental work become detached or loose, and lips will get bruised. We hope that you will understand that this is a problem that we cannot always prevent. If you wear dentures or removable dental appliances, you will usually be asked to remove them just prior to going back to the operating room.

If there is anything here that you do not understand, or if you have questions not answered here, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse, doctor, or anesthetist.