
When Your Child Needs Surgery: Anesthesia

Your child is having surgery. During surgery, your child will receive anesthesia. This is medicine that causes your child to relax and fall asleep, and not feel pain. This sheet will tell you about different types of anesthesia.

Anesthesia is given by an anesthesiologist. This is a doctor trained to give anesthesia. A trained nurse called a nurse anesthetist may help. They are part of your child's surgery team.

Types of anesthesia

Your child may have any of these during surgery:

- **General anesthesia.** This is often used for major types of surgery. It causes your child to fall asleep and not feel pain. It may be given in gas form. This is breathed in through a mask. Or it may be given in liquid form. This is put in a vein through an IV (intravenous) line. Sometimes both of these are used.
- **Regional anesthesia.** This may be used for some types of surgery. Part of the body is numbed. This is done by injecting anesthesia near the spinal cord. Or it may be injected into nerves in the neck, arms, or legs. Your child may stay awake or sleep lightly.
- **Monitored anesthesia care. This is also called monitored sedation.** It is often used for a short surgery that isn't deep in the body. Medicines called sedatives may be given by IV in a vein. These help your child relax. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) may also be used. Your child may stay awake or sleep lightly. But your child will likely not remember anything about the surgery.

Before surgery

- Follow all food, drink, and medicine directions given by your child's healthcare provider. This may mean that your child should not eat or drink for a set number of hours before surgery.
- On the day of surgery, you and your child will meet with the anesthesiologist. They will talk with you about the type of anesthesia your child will receive.
- You may need to sign a consent form. This says you allow your child to receive anesthesia.

What to tell the anesthesiologist

For your child's safety, tell the anesthesiologist if your child:

- Had anything to eat or drink before surgery
- Has any allergies
- Is taking any medicines

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- Has had a recent illness

During surgery

- Anesthesia may be started in a room called an induction room. Or it may be started in the operating room.
- You may be allowed to stay with your child until they are asleep. Check with your child's anesthesiologist.
- During surgery, the anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist controls the amount of anesthesia your child receives. Your child's heart rate, blood pressure, and blood oxygen levels are watched during surgery.
- Anesthesia is stopped once surgery is done. Your child will then wake up.

After surgery

- Your child is taken to a postanesthesia care unit (PACU) or a recovery room.
- You may be allowed to stay in the PACU or recovery room with your child. Every child reacts differently to anesthesia. Your child may wake up confused, upset, or crying. These reactions are normal. They usually pass quickly.