

# Learning About Anesthesia for Adults

To help keep you safe and free from pain during a surgery, a procedure, or some treatments, your medical care team will use anesthesia.

Unless it's an emergency, before you get anesthesia, your doctor will talk to you about what type you may get.

It can depend on the surgery or procedure.

But it also can be based on your health or test results.

Here are the types of anesthesia your doctor may talk about with you.

General anesthesia affects your whole body.

You may get it through an intravenous (I.V.) tube, it may be inhaled, or both.

During this kind of anesthesia, you'll be unconscious and unaware of any pain throughout your surgery.

And then there's regional anesthesia.

With this type, an injection of numbing medicine is used to block pain to a specific area of the body.

Examples of regional anesthesia include spinal, epidural, and peripheral nerve blocks.

There's also sedation.

A medicine or a combination of medicines are delivered through an I.V. to help you relax or fall asleep.

Sometimes sedation and regional anesthesia are used together.

"Local" anesthesia is a medicine or an injection given to numb a small area of the body.

Before you get any type of anesthesia, your doctor will examine you to check for anything that could affect your anesthesia care.

They'll also discuss any risks and how you may feel after the anesthesia.

Tell your anesthesia specialist about any health problems—such as sleep apnea—and any past surgeries.

Also tell the specialist if a family member has had problems with anesthesia.

Let the specialist know about all medicines and natural health products you take.

Let them know if you're pregnant or if you smoke.

And if you do smoke, try to stop for at least 1 month before your procedure.

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This may even be a good time to try to quit for good.

And here's something else you can prepare for.

Your anesthesia specialist may ask you a lot of questions that may seem personal.

But they're not asking to judge you or invade your privacy.

They're asking because they want to keep you safe.

For example, if you use marijuana, opioids, or other drugs, let them know.

They may need to adjust your medicines to keep you safe.

They will keep your information confidential.

Now, if your surgery or procedure involves staying at the hospital, remember to bring your CPAP machine if you use one.

Thinking about "going under"

or being in someone else's care while you are getting anesthesia may be stressful.

But knowing that your anesthesia specialist and the rest of the medical care team are trained and focused on helping you stay safe can help.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always talk to your anesthesia specialist.