

Dental Treatment under General Anaesthetic

Information for parents and carers

Dental treatment can often be carried out using an injection to numb areas of the mouth. Sometimes, sedation can be added to relax children who are anxious or afraid, by making them feel drowsy.

For some children, especially if they are very young, a general anaesthetic may be the only option for having dental treatment carried out. This leaflet is designed to help you and give you more information on how these procedures work. If you would like further information, then please ask the dental team or the anaesthetists at your hospital.

General Anaesthetic

General anaesthetic is when medicine is used to put your child to sleep for an operation so that they feel no pain and so that they are not aware of having treatment done. This happens in a hospital and specially trained doctors, called anaesthetists, care for your child whilst they are asleep and are also the ones who wake them up afterwards.

Sometimes before the anaesthetic is given the anaesthetist will give your child a sedative medicine to help them feel more relaxed and comfortable.

Some anaesthetics start with an injection into a vein. Anaesthetic cream is usually put on the child's arm or hand to numb their skin and reduce the pain of the injection. (The cream takes about 30 minutes to work)

Another option of anaesthetic is breathing in an anaesthetic gas through a face mask. This may take a little longer in older children.

After discussing all the options of how the anaesthetic can be given, you and your child can make the final decision about what would be best for them.

Risks

The dental team and anaesthetic team will discuss the risks in detail with you. Most children recover quickly and are soon back to normal after their operation and anaesthetic. Common risks include feeling sick, having a headache or a sore throat. They may have some pain and discomfort from their mouth. Some children may feel upset, dizzy or agitated after waking up. The more serious complications are very rare but include severe allergic reactions and risk of death or disability.

There is more information available at:

www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/anaesthesia-risk/children-young-people



On the day of general anaesthetic

Your child must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian so that consent can be confirmed for the procedure. No more than two adults should accompany your child. Children and other family members are not allowed on the day of surgery.

Fasting

Your child must be fasted before their operation to keep them safe. You will be given more information about what time your child must stop eating and drinking when you are sent a date for their general anaesthetic. If your child is not fasted their operation will be cancelled.

What to bring

- Loose fitting clothes (e.g. joggers & t-shirt or pyjamas) plus a spare change of clothes
- Any current medication
- Favourite toy or comforter or tablet device- you may wish to download content beforehand
- Any special diet/baby milk required
- Nappies if required.

Aftercare

Your child will stay on the ward after their operation for a couple of hours to recover from the general anaesthetic. They will be monitored during this time by a nurse and encouraged to eat and drink. Very occasionally children may have to be kept in hospital overnight.

Your child may have some discomfort after their treatment and their mouth may still feel numb. The nursing team will advise you about further pain relief that can be given at home to top up any drugs (e.g. injections or suppositories) that may have been given in the operating theatre.

Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen may be given regularly, following the instructions. It is normal for regular pain relief to be needed for a few days after the operation.

Your child may require the next day off school, and you should be guided by how your child feels.

Going home

You will need to arrange your own transport home. Please avoid public transport where possible. If you need to use public transport, you will need to discuss the dentists and anaesthetists to decide if this is safe for your child.

Re-assessment appointment

If the date of your child's general anaesthetic is more than 6 months after their initial assessment, they will need to attend a review appointment at the dental clinic. The dental team will check if there are any changes to the dental treatment plan, update x-rays and re-sign paperwork. Your child must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Pain and problems

If your child experiences any pain from their teeth whilst waiting for their treatment, please contact your local dentist. They should see your child and provide care to relieve their symptoms. If following this, your child's symptoms continue or get worse, your dentist should contact us.

Looking after your child's teeth

It is important that you and your child look after their teeth whilst you wait for their general anaesthetic. You can help look after your child's teeth by:

- Taking them to their dentist for regular check-up appointments
- Cutting down on the number of sugary snacks and drinks taken between meals.
- Brushing teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

Preparing your child for their general anaesthetic

Please use the QR codes or links below for a range of leaflets and videos to help prepare your child for what to expect on the day of their general anaesthetic.

[A Little Deep Sleep- Animation Video](#)



www.formedfilms.co.uk/alittledeepsleep

[General Anaesthetic Videos and Leaflets](#)



www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/information-children-parents-carers