



# ANAESTHESIA AT GRACE

## WHAT IS AN ANAESTHETIC?

Anaesthetic medications are used to greatly reduce or stop pain and discomfort during surgery. They work by putting you to sleep or numbing an area of the body. Often different types of anaesthetics are used together to maximise comfort.

### General anaesthetic

General anaesthetics use a mixture of medications to keep you fully unconscious during an operation. This includes gases that are breathed and medicines injected into the blood stream. When you are unconscious, a breathing tube is often inserted through your mouth into your throat. This is removed as you wake up.

### Regional anaesthetic

Regional anaesthetics use local anaesthetic to make large areas of your body numb and can provide pain relief for a prolonged period of time. This includes nerve blocks for arms and legs. Spinal anaesthetics temporarily numb the lower body and are often used with hip and knee joint replacements.

## PATIENT RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE AN ANAESTHETIC

If you are going to have an operation it is important to think about how you can be as fit and healthy as possible in preparation.

- » If you think you could improve any long-term medical conditions like diabetes, breathing problems, high blood pressure or heart problems see your G.P.
- » Improve your fitness with exercise and activity. Losing some weight may also decrease the risk of complications. Your G.P. can give advice on exercise and weight loss.
- » Stop smoking. This will improve your heart and lungs while improving oxygen levels. Phone Quitline on 0800 778 778 for free support.
- » Bring an up-to-date list of the medications and health supplements you take to any pre-surgery assessments.
- » If you are breast-feeding, please bring this to the attention of your anaesthetist.

### Local anaesthesia

Local anaesthetic can be used to make a small area of your body numb. They may come as sprays, ointments or injections. Local and regional anaesthetics by themselves do not cause sedation or make you unconscious. However, they can be used in conjunction with sedation or a general anaesthetic.

### Sedation

With sedation, you are given medications that lower your level of consciousness so that you are comfortable during procedures that are not very painful. Procedures where sedation may be used include gastroscopy, colonoscopy and other small surgical operations.

## YOUR ANAESTHETIST

The anaesthetists that work at Grace Hospital are fully qualified medical specialists, completing at least a further seven years specialist training after graduating medical school.

This training includes experience and examinations in all types of anaesthetics, intensive care, resuscitation and the treatment of pain.

**Before your procedure** - Depending on your surgery and medical history, you may be required to attend an appointment to see your anaesthetist several days before the operation.

Here they will discuss your health history, perform a physical assessment, arrange further tests if required and talk about anaesthetic options.

Information regarding taking your usual medications will be given. There may be adjustments for special medicines such as diabetic medications (like insulin) or drugs that thin the blood (like warfarin).

Otherwise the anaesthetist will see you just prior to surgery on the day of the operation.

## PATIENT RESPONSIBILITIES CONTINUED...

**During your procedure** - A nurse will escort you into theatre. Once there, an Anaesthetic Technician will connect you to a variety of monitors. Often an intravenous infusion (drip) will be started.

Throughout the procedure the anaesthetist stays with you, closely watching how you are doing and carefully making adjustments to the anaesthetic.

**After your procedure** - The anaesthetist supports your immediate care if you are admitted into a Grace Hospital ward. This may include a review of pain management, nausea or medical conditions.

Nurse practitioners also work on the ward; these nurses have completed further study and qualifications. They can also assess, diagnose and prescribe medications.

The whole team works closely together to give you the best possible care.

## AFTER YOUR OPERATION

## Day stay

The effects of the anaesthetic may last for 24 hours and impair normal judgement. You should not drive a car, use dangerous equipment, drink alcohol or make major decisions within 24 hours of your anaesthetic. You should also have a responsible adult with you on the first night after your surgery.

## When staying overnight

Please bring in all your current medications in their original containers. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will prescribe these as appropriate during your stay. These medications will be kept in a secure place in your room. Doing this maintains safety and stops errors.

## RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF ANAESTHETICS

Having an anaesthetic is generally quite safe. However, each anaesthetic will have risks of side effects or problems.

Most side effects will be temporary like nausea, vomiting, headache, shivering, sore throat and bruises from IV drips. Allergic reactions occur rarely and can range from very mild to severe.

Very rarely some patients may have serious complications that can lead to long term problems. These include heart attack, stroke and organ failure. Your risk is higher if you have major medical issues.

Your anaesthetist will discuss the different risks and the likelihood of problems with you. Their role is to make sure your experience is as safe and comfortable as possible.

## QUESTIONS?

You will be able to speak to your anaesthetist on the day of surgery. Otherwise you can contact Grace Hospital and they will be able to direct you to the appropriate person.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.anzca.edu.au/patients/what-is-anaesthesia](http://www.anzca.edu.au/patients/what-is-anaesthesia)

## Questions to ask my doctor or healthcare professional...




GRACE



# GRACE

[gracehospital.co.nz](http://gracehospital.co.nz)