

Patient information

What Will Happen Now Your Child Needs A General Anaesthetics

Liverpool University Dental Hospital

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Introduction

Your child's dentist has advised you that your child should have a general anaesthetic in order to complete their dental care. Alternative methods of treatment should have been discussed when appropriate e.g. local anaesthetic alone, local anaesthesia with inhalation sedation, and local anaesthesia with intravenous sedation, and these have been deemed inappropriate.

This may be because your child cannot tolerate a local anaesthetic or the procedure is too complex to be completed using a local anaesthetic alone, even with sedation.

The next stage after the first examination is for your child to attend for an appointment where they will receive advice on helping to prevent tooth decay in the future, and at which they will be pre-assessed (this is explained later in the leaflet). Following this they will receive a general anaesthetic appointment for the necessary treatment to be carried out.

This leaflet contains detailed information about each appointment your child is required to attend.

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is a drug induced unconsciousness, provided by an anaesthetist, who is a doctor with specialist training. It is essential for some operations. Your child will be unconscious and will feel nothing while asleep.






What are the risks of general anaesthesia?

Unfortunately, general anaesthesia can have risks. Some are very common, but are usually short-lived: they may include nausea, confusion, and sore throat.

It is also possible that your child's teeth may be damaged during the anaesthetic. This is uncommon, and may happen in approximately 1 in 4500 general anaesthetics.

More serious risks, which could result in lasting brain damage or death, are very rare. Indeed, these more serious risks are lower for people who are young, fit, active, and well (for a healthy child the risk is less than 1 in 100,000).

Your child's dentist will have discussed risks with you when gaining consent, however, if you wish to ask further questions then there are useful numbers at the end of this leaflet.

People vary in how they interpret words and numbers. This scale is provided to help.				
				
Very common	Common	Uncommon	Rare	Very rare
1 in 10 Someone in your family	1 in 100 Someone in a street	1 in 1,000 Someone in a village	1 in 10,000 Someone in a small town	1 in 100,000 Someone in a large town

What are the benefits for your child when having a general anaesthetic?

1. A general anaesthetic allows dental treatment to be completed for very anxious and very young patients, or for patients whose treatment is considered too difficult to do while they are conscious.
2. The aim of this procedure is to complete all necessary dental treatment for your child in one appointment, in order to make them dentally healthy.
3. Your child will be unconscious and their movements will be restricted during the procedure. This reduces the risk of injury.

What should I tell my child about the general anaesthetic?

This will depend on the age of your child and how much they can understand. It may be enough to explain that some of their teeth are poorly and need to be removed or filled. You may want to explain that the doctor will give them medicine which will make them go to sleep while their teeth are removed or filled.

Do encourage your child to talk about the procedure if they wish to do so.

Getting ready for your child's operation

Before being given a general anaesthetic appointment most children will need to attend the Dental Hospital for a combined prevention and pre-assessment appointment.

If you are unable to keep this appointment (e.g. if your child is unwell) please call the hospital to make another one; if you fail to arrive for this appointment without calling us, then your child's operation date may be delayed.

- Please try to remember to bring your child's completed diet diary and their toothbrush.
- At the prevention part of the appointment, your child will be shown techniques for effective tooth brushing, how and when to use dental aids, and dietary advice.
- At the pre-assessment part of the appointment your child will be seen by the nursing staff in dental theatres, who will weigh and measure them. Their medical history will be checked in detail. Should you have any further questions you will be able to ask them and highlight any other concerns that you may have.

Fasting guidelines

For safety reasons, patients should not eat or drink for a specified time before having a general anaesthetic. This is to reduce the risk of vomiting, and possible inhalation of vomit during anaesthesia.

If your child has an afternoon appointment, please do not allow them to attend school before they have the anaesthetic. This is to reduce the risk of your child eating and drinking when they should not do so.

Your child must be supervised in a one to one home environment to ensure that these fasting instructions are followed.

If these instructions are not followed, your child's operation will be postponed.

The minimum fasting times are:

1. Your child should not have any solid food, milk, milky drinks, pure juices or fizzy drinks or even chewing gum for **six hours** before their appointment.
2. They can have clear fluids only, for example plain tap water, up to **two hours** before their appointment.
3. They should have nothing at all for the last two hours before their appointment – this includes water.
4. Any food given six hours before your child's appointment should be light and large fatty meals should be avoided.

If you need to cancel your child's operation

If your child cannot attend their operation for any reason please contact us as soon as possible, as the appointment may be given to somebody else on the waiting list. We will do our best to re-appoint your child as soon as possible. Please call dental theatres (telephone number can be found at the end of this booklet).

On the day of your child's operation

Please make sure that you have adequate pain relief (e.g. Paracetamol or Ibuprofen) at home for when your child returns; they may be experiencing some pain.

Please do not bring other children along with you on the day of the operation, as your child having treatment will require all your attention.

Children having general anaesthetic will require your one to one supervision after their procedure. If you attend with more than one child per adult, your child's operation may be postponed.

If your child is unwell on the day of the operation (or shortly before) or if you think that they may not be starved correctly, it is important that you call the hospital to discuss what to do. This may mean that your child's operation is cancelled. Please call dental theatres (the number can be found at the end of this booklet)

Welcome to Dental Theatres

On the day of the appointment, a nurse will care for you and your child while you are in dental theatres. Two to three children will be asked to arrive at the same time; this is so that important pre-operative checks can be made for each child before theatre begins.

As well as the nurse, you will meet the anaesthetist and consultant / dentist. If you have any remaining questions you will be able to ask them. If your child is very anxious then it may be appropriate for them to be given some medicine that should help them to relax. Following this, each child is taken into theatre for their treatment.

Your child may have to wait before their treatment begins. We would recommend that you bring some items to help entertain them (e.g. books, toys, games).

When it is your child's turn, you will be asked to accompany them into the anaesthetic room. There are a number of ways that the general anaesthetic may be started; lying on a trolley or, if they are very small or anxious, sitting on your lap.

The anaesthetist may use either gas through a face mask, or an injection in the back of your child's hand. If this is the case, your child may have some anaesthetic cream on their hands for 30 to 60 minutes before the anaesthetic.

The anaesthetist should discuss these different methods with you before the operation. Once your child is asleep you will be asked to wait in the waiting room until the procedure has been completed.

If your child is having extractions only then you may be apart for approximately 30 minutes. If your child is having fillings and extractions, then the operation will take longer. Once your child is conscious and the nursing staff are happy you will be reunited.

Please remember that at first your child may be upset, tearful, and drowsy, or even asleep, but this will quickly pass. Your child's mouth will feel numb as they will have received local anaesthetic whilst asleep.

After recovery, a member of the nursing staff will assess your child and discharge them when appropriate. You will be advised about painkillers and post-operative recovery for your child before you leave the hospital.

The time spent in recovery varies depending on the age of the child and the nature of the operation e.g. if they have had a sedative before the operation then recovery may take longer. It usually takes at least 30 minutes.

Going home

When you are discharged, you need to take your child straight home by private car or taxi. Public transport (bus or train) is not appropriate following the general anaesthetic because your child may be a little sleepy, and may require supervision.

If you are going home by private car it may be helpful to have a second responsible person; one to drive, and the other to look after your child.

Information to help you look after your child following dental treatment under general anaesthetic

- If needed, provide the pain relief that you would give for a headache e.g. Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.
- Your child should be supervised by an adult for the rest of the day.
- Drinks and soft food may be given on arrival home if your child is thirsty / hungry. Remember, your child's mouth may be numb for a few hours after treatment. Care should be taken to ensure drinks / foods are not too hot or chewy as your child may burn or bite themselves.
- Try to discourage your child from putting their fingers or tongue into any tooth sockets.
- Do not let your child rinse their mouth out for 24 hours after treatment as this will disturb the blood clot which is forming in the tooth socket.

- Normal tooth brushing can start after 24 hours, unless otherwise directed by your dentist.
- If your child is old enough to rinse their mouth, you may begin warm salty mouthwashes after 24 hours (one teaspoonful of salt in a beaker full of warm water). Mouth rinses should be done as often as possible, particularly after meals, and continued for five days.
- Your child should take the following day off school. If they feel well enough your child may return to school two days after the operation.
- If your child experiences bleeding, ask them to bite down on a bite pack provided by our staff for 20-30 minutes (not a tissue as this will break up and become trapped in the socket).

If the bleeding is not controlled after 30 minutes, or you have any further problems, contact the Dental Hospital Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5.00pm (number at the end of booklet). If outside of out of working hours, telephone the Emergency Department (A&E) at your local children's hospital, your own dentist or, 111 for advice.

Further information

Sometimes an extraction socket may take some time to heal and a dull ache may persist. This may require the socket to be treated with a local dressing which helps with pain control. If the pain is severe or fails to settle after the first 48 hours, please call one of the numbers at the end of the leaflet for advice.

Remember that your child has just had an operation. It is normal for them to feel more tired than usual for a few days afterwards.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Acknowledgement

This publication includes text from the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) leaflet 'You and your anaesthetic' Fourth edition 2014. The RCoA has not reviewed this as a whole.

Further information

Royal Liverpool Hospital
Main Switchboard
Tel: 0151 706 2000
Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000

Dental Hospital Extensions
Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5.00 pm
Paediatric Dental - Ext 5022
Dental Theatres - Ext 5011/ 5012
NHS 111 Service
Tel: 111

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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