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# Paediatric Anaesthesia Anaesthetics Department

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## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email [pals@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@asph.nhs.uk). If you still remain concerned please contact our Complaints Manager on 01932 722612 or email [complaints@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@asph.nhs.uk)

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## Further resources

Additional information about our two hospitals can be found at [www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk](http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk). This website also contains information about the anaesthetic department that will be looking after your child.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists is responsible for the standards in anaesthesia throughout the UK. Information about this organization can be found at [www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)

# Paediatric Anaesthesia

## Introduction

This leaflet explains what to expect when your child has their operation or investigation under general anaesthesia in the hospital.

There is also a series of leaflets about anaesthesia and related topics compiled by patient representatives, parents and anaesthetists available at the website [www.youranaesthetic.info](http://www.youranaesthetic.info)

You can also ask questions to staff members in the hospital.

## What is anaesthesia?

The word anaesthesia means loss of sensation. A general anaesthetic ensures that your child is unconscious and free of pain during a test (investigation) or operation.

Anaesthetists are specialist doctors who give the medicines used to induce and maintain the anaesthesia for the period of the procedure. They will be with your child throughout the procedure and are also involved in your child's pain relief once they are awake. You will meet your anaesthetist before the procedure and can ask them any questions that you may still have at this time.

## **Choice**

It is often possible for you and your child to choose how the anaesthetic and other medicines are given. Sometimes there are medical reasons why things have to be done in a certain way – these will be explained to you.

The anaesthetist and you will agree on the plan before the procedure takes place. We want to provide the best possible care for your child and nothing will be done without your full understanding and consent of the plan.

## **Preparation**

It is important to prepare your child before they come into hospital as this will help to reduce any anxiety that they may be experiencing.

If they are old enough to understand then they should be told:

- that they are going into hospital
- that they will be having an operation or investigation
- some basic information about what will happen to them when they are in hospital.

Everything should be explained to your child in a way that he/she can understand. Many hospitals have play staff who can give explanations and encourage discussion through play.

Children between 2 and 3 years of age should be told 2 – 3 days before and again on the day of admission.

The exact likelihood of any complication depends on your child's health and also on the nature of the procedure and anaesthetic. Any potential complications will be discussed with you and your child before the anaesthetic is given.

- 4 hours before babies can have breast milk.
- 2 hours before all children and babies can have a drink of water or diluted cordial **but not** a fizzy drink.

### **Premedication**

On some occasions the anaesthetist may want to give your child some medicine in the time leading up to the anaesthetic. This could be for a number of reasons but are typically given to help your child to stay calm or to stop them feeling sick or pain after the anaesthetic. Sometimes they might make your child feel sleepy or drowsy.

### **During the Anaesthetic**

One parent can go down to theatres with your child and a nurse from the ward will accompany you. The anaesthetic will be given in the anaesthetic room which adjoins the theatre. You will be able to stay with your child until after the anaesthetic is given and will be shown back to the ward by the nurse once they are asleep. The anaesthetist will stay with your child throughout the procedure and monitor them continuously. You will be able to see your child in the recovery room, next to the theatre, once they have woken up.

### **Side effects and complications**

Complications are extremely rare with the vast majority of children back to themselves soon after they wake up from the anaesthetic. Occasionally they may have a sore throat or feel sick when they wake but this soon passes and there are medicines that can be given to treat these symptoms if necessary.

Children between 4 and 7 years of age should be told 4 – 7 days before the day of admission.

Older children will usually be involved in making decisions about the operation or investigation and discussion can take place a few weeks before the day of admission.

It may be necessary for your child to stay in hospital overnight so you should let them know that you are allowed to stay as well if needed. If you can't stay with them all the time then tell them when you will next be visiting.

All jewellery, make-up, nail varnish and decorative piercings should be removed. If the jewellery cannot be removed then the hospital staff will cover it with tape during the anaesthetic.

There may be a lot of waiting around in the hospital so let your child bring their own toys, books or personal music players to keep them entertained.

If you have any special requirements then please let the ward staff know before you arrive so that we can arrange anything that is needed.

**Please phone the hospital if your son/daughter develops a severe cough or cold, or has contact with chicken pox shortly before the day of the operation or investigation.**

## **Some ideas of what to say:**

All of the information that you tell your child should be given in a way that they can easily understand

- Use simple words that your children can easily understand
- Explain that the procedure will help them to get better
- Ask your child if they have any questions about what is going to happen
- Books, toys, games and stories can help you explain things
- Tell them when they will have the procedure and how long they are expected to stay in the hospital for

There are nurses and play staff on the children's hospital ward who can help with explanations once you have arrived.

## **A pre-operative visit**

An anaesthetist should visit you on the ward before the procedure to discuss your son/daughter's anaesthetic. The anaesthetist needs to find out about his/her general health, previous experiences of anaesthesia, any medicines prescribed and any allergies he/she might have.

This is a good time to talk about any previous experiences your child has had with injections or hospitals, or any particular concerns you have about this visit.

You may find it helpful to make a list of questions you want to ask.

For practical reasons, the anaesthetist who comes to see you on the ward may not always be the same one who administers your child's anaesthetic, but the information you give them will be passed on.

## **Delaying the operation or investigation**

Occasionally the anaesthetist may learn something about your son/daughter that means it would be safer not to do the procedure on that day.

This could happen if he/she has a bad cold; a temperature has a rash or has eaten food too recently.

## **Nothing to eat and drink, fasting and 'nil by mouth'**

The hospital should give you clear instructions about fasting, and it is important for your son/daughter to follow these.

If there is food or liquid in your child's stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come up into the back of the throat and damage his or her lungs.

These are the latest times that you should give your son/daughter anything to eat or drink:

- 6 hours before your son/daughter can have a light meal, a glass of milk or a fizzy drink.
- Bottle fed babies can have formula feed.