

## Anesthesia: General Anesthesia



You're due to have surgery. During surgery, you'll be given medicine called anesthesia or anesthetic. This will keep you comfortable and pain-free. Your anesthesia provider will use general anesthesia .



### What is general anesthesia?

General anesthesia puts you into a state like deep sleep. It goes into the bloodstream (IV anesthetics), into the lungs (gas anesthetics), or both. You feel nothing during the procedure. You won't remember it either. During the procedure, the anesthesia provider monitors you continuously. They track your heart rate and rhythm, blood pressure, breathing, and blood oxygen.

- **IV anesthetics.** IV anesthetics are given through an IV (intravenous) line in your arm. They're often given first. This is so you're asleep before a gas anesthetic is started. Some kinds of IV anesthetics ease pain. Others relax you. Your healthcare provider will decide which kind is best in your case.
- **Gas anesthetics.** Gas anesthetics are breathed into the lungs. They're often used to keep you asleep. They can be given through a face mask. Or they can be given through a tube placed in your voice box (larynx) or breathing tube (trachea).
  - **Face mask.** Your anesthesia provider will most likely place the face mask over your nose and mouth while you're still awake. You'll breathe oxygen through the mask as your IV anesthetic is started. Gas anesthetic may be added through the mask.
  - **Tube in the larynx or trachea.** The tube will be inserted into your throat after you're asleep.

### Anesthesia tools and medicines

You will likely have:

- **IV anesthetics.** These are put into an IV line into your bloodstream.
- **Gas anesthetics.** You breathe these anesthetics into your lungs. Then they pass into your bloodstream.

- **Pulse oximeter.** This is a small clip that's attached to the end of your finger. It measures your blood oxygen level.
- **Electrocardiography leads (electrodes).** These are small sticky pads that are placed on your chest. They record your heart rate and rhythm.
- **Blood pressure cuff.** This reads your blood pressure.

## Risks and possible complications

General anesthesia has some risks. These include:

- Breathing problems
- Upset stomach (nausea) and vomiting
- Sore throat or hoarseness (usually temporary)
- Allergic reaction to the anesthetic
- Irregular heartbeat (rare)
- Cardiac arrest (rare)

## Anesthesia safety

- Follow any directions you're given for not eating or drinking before your procedure.
- Tell your healthcare provider what medicines you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines. It also includes vitamins, herbs, and other supplements. You'll be asked when those were last taken.
- Have a trusted adult drive you home after the procedure.
- For the first 24 hours after your surgery:
  - Don't drive or use heavy equipment.
  - Don't make important decisions or sign legal documents. If important decisions or signing legal documents is necessary during the first 24 hours after surgery, have a trusted family member or spouse act on your behalf.
  - Don't drink alcohol.
  - Have a responsible adult stay with you. They can watch for problems and help keep you safe.

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