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Anesthesia

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia is the use of medicines to prevent pain during surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/surgery.html>] and other procedures. These medicines are called anesthetics. They may be given by injection, inhalation, topical lotion, spray, eye drops, or skin patch. They cause you to have a loss of feeling or awareness.

What is anesthesia used for?

Anesthesia may be used in minor procedures, such as filling a tooth. It could be used during childbirth [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirth.html>] or procedures such as colonoscopies [<https://medlineplus.gov/colonoscopy.html>] . And it is used during minor and major surgeries.

In some cases, a dentist, nurse, or doctor may give you an anesthetic. In other cases, you may need an anesthesiologist. This is a doctor who specializes in giving anesthesia.

What are the types of anesthesia?

There are several different types of anesthesia:

- **Local anesthesia** numbs a small part of the body. It might be used on a tooth that needs to be pulled or on a small area around a wound that needs stitches. You are awake and alert during local anesthesia.
- **Regional anesthesia** is used for larger areas of the body such as an arm, a leg, or everything below the waist. You may be awake during the procedure, or you may be given sedation. Regional anesthesia may be used during childbirth, a Cesarean delivery [<https://medlineplus.gov/cesareandelivery.html>] (C-section), or minor surgeries.
- **General anesthesia** affects the whole body. It makes you unconscious and unable to move. It is used during major surgeries, such as heart surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartsurgery.html>] , brain surgery, back surgery, and organ transplants [<https://medlineplus.gov/organtransplantation.html>] .

What are the risks of anesthesia?

Anesthesia is generally safe. But there can be risks, especially with general anesthesia, including:

- Heart rhythm [<https://medlineplus.gov/arrhythmia.html>] or breathing [<https://medlineplus.gov/breathingproblems.html>] problems
- An allergic reaction [<https://medlineplus.gov/drugreactions.html>] to the anesthesia
- Delirium [<https://medlineplus.gov/delirium.html>] after general anesthesia. Delirium makes people confused. They may be unclear about what is happening to them. Some people over the age of 60 have delirium for several days after surgery. It can also happen to children when they first wake up from anesthesia.
- Awareness when someone is under general anesthesia. This usually means that the person hears sounds. But sometimes they can feel pain. This is rare.

Start Here

- Anesthesia [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anesthesia-types.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Anesthesia (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anesthesia-basics.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

- General Anesthesia [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/anesthesia/about/pac-20384568?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

- What Is Anesthesia? [<https://www.nigms.nih.gov/education/fact-sheets/Pages/anesthesia>]  (National Institute of General Medical Sciences)

Treatments and Therapies

- Herbal and Dietary Supplements and Anesthesia [https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ASA_Supplements-Anesthesia_Updated-1.pdf] (American Society of Anesthesiologists) - **PDF**

Related Issues

- Anesthesia Awareness (Waking Up) During Surgery [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/risks/waking-up-during-surgery/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Anesthesia Recovery [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/recovery/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Effects of Anesthesia [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/anesthesia-101/effects-of-anesthesia/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Preparing for Surgery: Checklist [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/prep/preparing-for-surgery-checklist/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Role of the Anesthesiologist [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/anesthesia-101/role-of-physician-anesthesiologist/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Spinal Headaches [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/spinal-headaches/symptoms-causes/syc-20377913?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/spinal-headaches/symptoms-causes/syc-20377913?p=1>]

Specifics

- Epidural Injections [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/epidural>] (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/epidural>]
- Obesity [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/risks/obesity/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Outpatient Surgery [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/procedures/outpatient-surgery/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)
- Speak Up: Anesthesia and Sedation [<https://digitalassets.jointcommission.org/api/public/content/27d22c3596384d10b09610bd28943e1d?v=d714bc6a>] **Infographic** (Joint Commission) - **PDF**

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Anesthesia [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=Anesthesia&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Limitations of informed consent in routine clinical practice - An observational... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739487>]
- Article: Retrospective evaluation of anesthesia management and clinical outcomes in patients undergoing... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739475>]
- Article: Effect of opioid-free anaesthesia on postoperative delirium in elderly patients undergoing... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40721742>]

Anesthesia -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Anesthesia%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comm+ent%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Children

- Anesthesia (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anesthesia-basics.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Anesthesia: What to Expect (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anesthesia.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Helping Kids Get Ready for Surgery [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anesthesia-prepare.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Pediatric Sedation [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/safety-pediatric-sedation>]
(American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/safety-pediatric-sedation>]
- Sedation (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sedation.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/sedation.html>]
- What Is a Pediatric Anesthesiologist? [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/health-management/pediatric-specialists/Pages/What-is-a-Pediatric-Anesthesiologist.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/family-life/health-management/pediatric-specialists/paginas/what-is-a-pediatric-anesthesiologist.aspx>]

Teenagers

- Anesthesia -- What to Expect (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anesthesia.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/anesthesia.html>]

Women

- Labor Pain [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/pain-management/types-of-pain/labor/>]
(American Society of Anesthesiologists)

Older Adults

- Age [<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/risks/age/>] (American Society of Anesthesiologists)

Patient Handouts

- Conscious sedation for surgical procedures [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007409.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007409.htm>]
- Epidural block - pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000484.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000484.htm>]
- General anesthesia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007410.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007410.htm>]
- Spinal and epidural anesthesia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007413.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007413.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Anesthesia - what to ask your doctor - adult [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000183.htm>]

Anesthesia - what to ask your doctor - child [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000184.htm>]

Conscious sedation for surgical procedures [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007409.htm>]

CSF leak [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001068.htm>]

Epidural block - pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000484.htm>]

General anesthesia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007410.htm>]

Malignant hyperthermia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001315.htm>]

Spinal and epidural anesthesia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007413.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/pain.html>]

Surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/surgery.html>]

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