

Anaesthesia explained

General anaesthesia

General anaesthesia is a state of controlled unconsciousness during which you feel nothing. You will have no memory of what happens while you are anaesthetised.

A general anaesthetic is essential for a very wide range of operations. This includes all major operations on the heart or lungs or in the abdomen, and most operations on the brain or the major arteries. It is also normally needed for laparoscopic (keyhole) operations on the abdomen.

Anaesthetic drugs are injected into a vein, or anaesthetic gases are given for the patient to breathe. These drugs stop the brain from responding to sensory messages travelling from nerves in the body.



Shortly after the anaesthetic has started (left) and in the operating theatre (below)



Anaesthetic unconsciousness is different from a natural sleep. You cannot be woken from an anaesthetic until the drugs are stopped and their effects wear off.

While you are unconscious, the team in theatre look after you with great care.

Your anaesthetist stays near to you all the time.



Anaesthetist and patient in theatre (left) and an anaesthetist and anaesthetic nurse with the patient in the operating theatre (below)

