

Your Surgery

at New England Baptist Hospital

General Anesthesia: What You Need to Know

What is general anesthesia?

General anesthesia is medicine administered to keep you asleep, relaxed, and pain free during a procedure or surgery. The medicine is given through an IV or, it may be inhaled. Healthcare providers usually use both inhaled and IV medications together.

How can I prepare for anesthesia?

If you smoke or drink alcohol, your healthcare provider will instruct you to stop smoking or drinking alcohol at least 48 hours before you have anesthesia. You will be instructed not to eat or drink after midnight. This decreases your chance of complications during and after surgery. Tell the providers about all of the medicines you take, including vitamins and herbs. They will tell you which medicines to take, or not take, on the day of your procedure.

Tell your healthcare provider if you, or any family member, have had any problems with anesthesia in the past. Your healthcare provider will instruct you to not wear makeup or dark nail polish. Please arrange to have someone drive you home from the hospital.

What else do I need to know about anesthesia?

You may receive an IV antibiotic and an anti-anxiety agent before your procedure or surgery. You may also have an oxygen mask placed over your nose and mouth. A breathing tube is used to control your breathing while you sleep. The healthcare providers will monitor your blood pressure, heart rate, and all vital signs throughout the procedure. The amount and type of medicine used to keep you asleep will depend on numerous medical factors.

What happens after general anesthesia?

You will be taken to a post anesthesia room where you can rest until you are awake. You may be cold after waking up from surgery, in which case your care team will apply warming therapy (e.g. warming comfort gown or warm blanket, etc.). You may also have nausea, a dry mouth, or a sore throat. Depending on your surgery or procedure, you will either be taken to a hospital room or discharged to your home. Do not drive yourself home. It is best to have someone stay with you for 24 hours after you have received general anesthesia. Do not make important decisions for 24 hours after receiving anesthesia.

What are the risks of general anesthesia?

You could have a severe reaction to the medications, but this is rare. Pain medication administered may cause drowsiness, constipation or nausea and vomiting.

Care Agreement

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss options with your healthcare providers to decide what treatment plans are safest for you. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

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