

General anaesthetic



A general anaesthetic causes a state of unconsciousness, stops you from feeling pain in your whole body, and produces a 'sleep-like' state.

In most cases, a combination of medicines are used for a general anaesthetic. Depending on the individual case, a combination of sleeping drugs, pain relief, and muscle relaxants are injected into the vein.

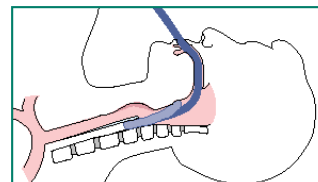
Anaesthetic procedure

Before the anaesthetic begins, we will hold a face mask over your mouth and nose to provide you with additional oxygen before you go to sleep. The anaesthetic starts with the medicines being injected through the infusion (drip). If required, the anaesthetic can also be started by you breathing in an anaesthetic gas. Once you are asleep, we will use the face mask to support your breathing. This method is used for short procedures lasting up to 15 minutes.

Ventilation with an intubation tube

To manage your airway during longer procedures, a special airway mask is inserted into your larynx (laryngeal mask) or into your windpipe (intubation).

Although a laryngeal mask allows patients to breathe independently, a ventilation device is generally used to provide artificial ventilation for longer procedures.



Risks and side effects

The risk of severe anaesthesia-related incidents has been significantly reduced by continuous care provided by your anaesthetist and close monitoring through technical devices.

Although many patients are operated on as emergencies or are seriously unwell, severe anaesthesia-related incidents are extremely rare these days, which means there is no need for you to worry unnecessarily about this. However, we would still like to inform you of possible risks and side effects. Ultimately, it is best if we provide you with an in-depth explanation of risks and side effects in a personal discussion that takes into account your personal needs and circumstances.

Frequently asked questions about a general anaesthetic:

“Why am I not allowed to eat or drink anything before the operation?”

As well as causing a state of unconsciousness and stopping you from feeling pain, a general anaesthetic also switches off your protective reflexes (e.g. swallowing and coughing reflexes). This means that there is a risk of bringing up the contents of your stomach into your throat and inhaling them (aspiration), which causes serious lung inflammation. The closer your last meal was to the procedure, the greater this risk. For this reason, you shouldn't eat any solid food or drink any non-clear liquids (e.g. milk, fruit juices) for at least six hours before an anaesthetic.

“Will I really not wake up during the operation?”

Once you have gone to sleep, your anaesthetist will constantly check not only your vital organ functions, but also the level of the anaesthetic, which can be regulated extremely precisely and rapidly with the medicines available today. An electroencephalogram (EEG) monitor is used to check the effect and depth of the anaesthetic.

“When will I be properly awake again?”

Modern anaesthetic medicines allow the duration of the anaesthetic to be very carefully controlled. You will be 'awake' again just a few minutes after the end of your operation. This means that you will be able to breathe adequately again, that your protective reflexes will have returned, and that we can communicate with you. Depending on the type and duration of the operation it will take at least one hour, and often several hours, before you feel interested in your surroundings again and in activities such as reading, watching television, etc. This period of time also depends on the type and dose of pain relief that you require after your operation.

“How strong will my pain be?”

Pain following surgery cannot be completely avoided, but these days it can be kept at a bearable level. However, the pain relief you require depends mainly on the type of operation you have. To ensure that you feel as well as possible after your operation, your pain relief will already be adjusted during the procedure to the dose you are expected to need.

“Is it possible that I won't wake up again?”

Anaesthetics are safer than ever today. This positive fact is mainly due to the development of new medicines and to improved monitoring of vital organ functions. However, even today, life-threatening complications may occur in rare cases. This risk is associated less with the actual anaesthetic and more with any underlying conditions the patient may have and with the type of operation..

“Will I feel sick after the operation?”

Nausea and vomiting used to occur after almost every anaesthetic. Modern medicines mean that these unpleasant side effects occur considerably less frequently. However, even today, we unfortunately cannot guarantee that you will not experience any nausea after your operation. The frequency and extent of the nausea depend on your personal disposition and on the operation that you have. However, if we know that you are likely to react in this way, we can take particular preventive measures.

“When can I eat and drink again?”

If there are no restrictions because of your operation, you can eat and drink again as soon as you want to **two hours after the end of the operation**.