

Department of  
Anaesthesiology, Intensive Care and  
Pain Medicine

# Paediatric Anaesthesia: A Guide For Parents



# Contents

- The Clinic Visit
- The Pre-operative Assessment
- Preparation for Surgery
- The Day of Surgery
- Post-operative Care



# The Clinic Visit

## 1. Background Information

This brochure explains what to expect when your child comes into hospital to have an operation under General Anaesthesia (GA).

Under GA, your child will be unconscious and free of pain during their operation.

## 2. Who We Are and What We Do

Anaesthetists are specialist doctors who administer the anaesthetic and look after the health of your child during surgery and recovery. They will also ensure that adequate pain relief is provided during and after the surgery.



# The Pre-Operative Assessment

## 3. The Pre-Operative Assessment

During the pre-operative assessment, it is important that we obtain the following information about your child:

- Any known medical illnesses
- Medication(s) that your child is taking
- Known allergies including drugs, food or tapes / plasters
- Any problems in your child's development / milestones
- Any previous surgeries or anaesthetic that your child has undergone
- Family history of severe reactions to anaesthesia

We will also be obtaining your child's height and weight.

## 4. Risks and Common Side Effects Associated with GA

These will be explained in the pre-operative assessment clinic, using the Anaesthesia Patient Information Sheet (PIS). You can also clarify any concerns you may have with the anaesthetist on the day of surgery.

## 5. Best Time for Questions!

The anaesthetist will review your child again and discuss your child's anaesthetic plan on the day of the surgery. Should you have any questions that you hope to address before the day of surgery, please highlight them to the doctors / nurses at the pre-operative assessment clinic.



# Preparation for Surgery

## 6. Preparing Your Child

Depending on your child's age and level of understanding, you can try and explain that they are going to the hospital for an operation to help them get better.

There are leaflets for children of different ages, available to download from the following website: [www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo). Scan the QR code below to access the materials.



- *Rees Bear Has An Anaesthetic* (suitable for ages 3 to 6 with an adult reader)
- *Davy the Detective: Finding Out About Anaesthetics* (for ages 7 to 11)
- *General Anaesthesia: A Brief Guide For Young People* (for ages 12 years and above)

Scan the QR code to watch an animation called "A Little Deep Sleep – a Family Guide to Anaesthetics", which is helpful for children up to the age of 12 years. (Source: Bristol Royal Hospital for Children)



## 7. Fasting

Fasting instructions will be provided from the pre-operative assessment clinic, as well as during the confirmatory phone call from the hospital one day before the surgery.

These fasting instructions must be strictly adhered to. If there is food or liquid in your child's stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come back up to the back of the throat and enter the lungs, and this may lead to respiratory complications.

Inadequate fasting may lead to cancellation/ postponement of the surgery.

## 8. If Your Child is Unwell

If your child is unwell (e.g. coughs, colds, diarrhoea, vomiting, fever) in the 2 weeks before surgery, please contact the hospital: the surgery may need to be postponed to a later date until after your child has recovered and is well again.



# The Day of Surgery

## 9. Local Anaesthetic and Sedation

A numbing cream will be applied on your child's hands, and covered with a clear dressing. This local anaesthetic cream takes 30 to 60 minutes to work. It will reduce the pain when a plastic tube, called a cannula, is placed into your child's vein on the hand or arm.

The anaesthetist will review your child. If necessary, your child may be given some sedative medications to help them relax before they enter the Operating Theatre for the actual surgery and GA.

## 10. Going Into the Operating Theatre (OT)

One parent/ caregiver will be able to accompany your child into the OT. Together with the parent/ caregiver, we will help to reassure and engage the child as we begin to administer the anaesthetic.

## 11. General Anaesthesia for Children

To help your child undergo GA, we will either:

- Insert a cannula into a vein and inject the anaesthetic medications, then continue the anaesthesia by using a gas, OR
- Start by getting your child to breathe a gas to fall asleep. The cannula will then be inserted after he/she is asleep.

The anaesthetist will discuss with you which is the recommended way to start the anaesthetic. Sometimes, the expected order may change, depending on the reaction and response of your child at the point in time.

It may take up to a few minutes for the anaesthetic to take effect. It is quite normal for the child to become restless during this time, or for their breathing to sound different. Our hospital staff will help to hold and support your child during this time, as they go under anaesthesia.

As soon as your child is asleep, a hospital staff will accompany you out of the OT to allow the surgery to proceed safely.



# Post-operative Care

## 12. After the Surgery

Most children will wake up in the recovery area which is located next to the OT.

You will be informed when the surgery has ended and one parent/ caregiver can be allowed to accompany your child in the recovery area, as they slowly awaken from the GA.

## 13. Distress on Waking

Some children may show signs of confusion or distress when they wake up. This is more common in younger children.

Very few children become very agitated upon waking. They may cry or roll about, and this may last for 30 minutes or longer. The anaesthetist and nurses will help to assess and comfort your child. This includes providing more pain relief if necessary.

## 14. Going Home

The surgeon and anaesthetist will review your child again. You can return home when your child is recovering well and when it is safe.

You will be given advice on how to give pain relief medications at home and who to contact if you have concerns.

### *TTSH Disclaimer*

*Acknowledgement: Information from this brochure has been adapted from the leaflet "Your child's general anaesthetic" (Sixth Edition, February 2020) published by the Royal College of Anaesthetists, United Kingdom. It is available at [www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo).*



## Pre-Admission Counselling and Evaluation (PACE) Clinic

TTSH Medical Centre, Level B1

### Contact:

6357 2244 (PACE Clinic)  
6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



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