

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Anaesthesia and day surgery

What is general anaesthesia?

General anaesthesia is a way of making sure a child is more than just asleep. Medicines are used to make sure your child is unconscious so that during surgery, they are not aware of what is happening or feeling pain. The doctor who looks after your child for the anaesthetic is called an anaesthetist.

How safe is anaesthesia?

Modern anaesthesia is very safe. In fact, the risk of anaesthesia and surgery is thought to be less than the risk of delaying or not doing your child's operation. Your anaesthetist has had a lot of training to make sure the anaesthesia is effective and safe. So while no one could guarantee there is zero risk during an anaesthetic or surgery, an anaesthetist will be there continuously to keep an eye out for any complications. A fact sheet on specific anaesthesia-related effects on the brain is available ([see below](#))

Why does my child need to fast?

It is important for anyone having an anaesthetic to have an empty stomach. If the stomach is full, there is a chance that during the anaesthetic whatever is in there could end up somewhere else like the lungs.

Before the day of the operation, the day surgery staff will call and give you times to stop eating and drinking.

Generally this will mean:

- No solid food or milk for six hours before anaesthesia.
- Clear fluids (things you can see through) up to 1 hour before anaesthesia.

- For breastfeeding children, we usually request 4 hours with no feeds before anaesthesia. Formula feeds are thicker, so they are considered as "solids" for fasting.

Does anaesthesia have any side effects?

Most children recover from anaesthesia quickly and without problems. Most common side effects are easily treated or we take steps to prevent them. Some children may feel grumpy, have a sore throat or feel sick. We recommend letting your children eat and drink when they feel like it – there is no need to force them. If vomiting occurs it is rare for it to be severe. Contact your hospital if:

- Your child continues to vomit frequently i.e. is not keeping anything down.

OR

- If your child is still vomiting for more than 12 hours after the operation.

Will my child be in pain after the operation?

Mild or moderate pain after an operation can occur and depends a lot on the surgery. Your anaesthetist will recommend appropriate pain relievers. Pain relieving medicines include:

- Paracetamol and ibuprofen
- Local anaesthetic drugs
- Stronger pain relieving drugs such as morphine

What else can I do?

Many parents find bringing their child for surgery challenging and are unsure what they should do. You have actually been preparing to be part of the

perioperative team for the whole time you have been looking after your child. A few further things that may help your child on the day:

- Keep to those fasting times – it can be tricky but if a child does eat, surgery may be delayed.
- Talk to your child about the anaesthesia and surgery. We find that in most cases, kids are reassured when they know what is likely to happen on the day and there will be people looking after them to make sure things are great.
- Ask questions yourself – we enjoy answering them. Every bit of information and reassurance we can offer helps.

Of course after the operation, your job will be to look after your child. You have done that before and most times your instinct will be right. You will also have contact information in case you need to call for advice.

Children’s painful procedures and operations (fact sheet)

<http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/childrens-painful-procedures-and-operations>

Pain – the facts (fact sheet)

<http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/pain-the-facts>

Statement on Anaesthesia-related neurotoxicity

http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/ou/anaesthesia/resources/neurotoxicity_and_anaesthesia/consensus_neurotoxicity_statement.pdf

Other information for after the anaesthesia

We aim to give our kids and families the best care possible. To do this we collect information on a regular basis from our records and our families, taking care to keep your information private. Sometimes that will involve a phone call. If you have feedback for us, we are always happy to hear your suggestions.

Remember:

- Anaesthesia is very safe. There is only a small risk of complications.
- Follow the advice about fasting provided by the day surgery staff.
- There will be a plan to help manage any pain and discomfort.