

Information for Patients

General Anaesthetic for Paediatric Eye Surgery

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic means that your child will be given medication to induce an unconscious state (sleep), so that they will not feel or remember the treatment. This may be given by injection and/or a gas breathed in via a face mask. It can take up to 24 hours to recover from a general anaesthetic.

Why do we give children a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is used for all types of surgery. It is also used to ensure that a young child will lie perfectly still during a procedure, for example examination of the eye, removal of stitches (sutures) or a specialised scan or procedure that a baby or young child would not tolerate whilst awake.

What are the effects of a general anaesthetic?

Your child may experience any of the following while recovering from a general anaesthetic:

- Drowsiness.
- Nausea/sickness.
- Uncoordinated or dizzy.
- On rare occasions your child may have difficulties passing urine (due to loss of feeling); therefore, it is important that they pass urine before being discharged home.

Why must your child stay in hospital for a period, following a general anaesthetic?

Your child must remain on the ward for at least 2 hours following an anaesthetic. This is to ensure their safety and monitor any effects of the anaesthetic.

During the recovery period your child may be very sleepy or restless; this is quite normal but can vary greatly from one child to another.

Once your child is sufficiently awake, they may have a drink of water or weak juice. If tolerated they can then have some light diet, usually toast or cereal.

During the recovery period your child will be monitored by the nursing staff. This involves checking your child's breathing, pulse and temperature, and observing their general colour and condition.

Once your child is tolerating food and drink and has passed urine, they will be discharged home if the nurse considers them sufficiently recovered. Although well enough to go home they will not recover completely from the effect of the anaesthetic for 12-24 hours.

To ensure your child's safety we advise that young children and babies are not left unattended for 24 hours.

How to keep your child safe

- Please travel home from hospital by car or taxi if possible.
- Keep your child indoors overnight, where you can observe them.
- Do not allow your child to ride a bicycle, electric scooter, or use any motorised toys for 24 hours.

Rest and comfort

Your child may complain of a slight headache following the anaesthetic. Do not worry; this is a normal side effect.

If your child is in pain, give them paracetamol/Calpol®; ensure that you follow the dosage instructions on the bottle.

Your child may feel more tired than usual, let them rest and recover in their own time.

Food and drink

Your child may eat and drink as normal.

Return to school/nursery

Your child may return to school/nursery the next day if they are fully recovered, unless you have been advised otherwise by the doctor or nursing staff.

If you have any questions or need any advice, please contact the paediatric nurse practitioner on (0161) 701 8244, Monday – Friday, 8.00 am - 4.30 pm; an answerphone service is available. If your child is unwell and you require urgent advice outside of the above hours, please contact the NHS helpline on 111.

