

University Dental Hospital of Manchester  
Department of Child Dental Health

## Information for Parents or Guardians

# Children About To Have a General Anaesthetic for Tooth Extraction

## General anaesthesia

A general anaesthetic ensures that your child is unconscious and pain free during an operation. Anaesthetics are given by specialist anaesthetic doctors who look after the health of your child during the procedure.

## Preparing your child

There are a few things that you can do before your child's operation to prepare them to come into hospital. Unless they are very young, try to explain that they will be going into hospital and some basic information about what will happen.

## The day of surgery

It is usually best that general anaesthetics are carried out when your child is well. If your child is unwell, please contact the hospital before coming to ensure that staff are aware and can discuss what to do. It may be best to delay the procedure until they are better.

## Fasting

All children who have a general anaesthetic need to have an empty stomach, this makes the anaesthetic safer. This is because if there is food or liquid in your child's stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come up into the back of the throat and damage his or her lungs. The fasting instructions and times will be written on your appointment letter and must be carefully followed. Children's stomachs take different times to empty depending on what is in them. Please follow the general rules below:

- Up to 6 hours before the anaesthetic, children can have food and formula milk.
- Up to 4 hours before the anaesthetic, children can have breast milk.
- Up to 2 hours before the anaesthetic, children can have sips of water only.

## What to expect on the day

### Before the procedure

On arrival you and your child will sit in a waiting room before seeing the people in the team. When you are called you will meet several people– one or two anaesthetists, a dentist and three or four nurses. The anaesthetist will ask you about your child’s health and whether they have had a cough or a cold recently, about any previous anaesthetics they have had or any medical problems. The nurse will place a numbing cream on the back of your child’s hand. This is a good opportunity to ask any questions which you may have.

Once you have seen the nurses, the dentist and the anaesthetist you will await your child’s turn for surgery. The lists are busy and we usually see the children in age order to minimise the time that the youngest children are starved.

### In theatre

You may (but are under no pressure to) accompany your child to the anaesthetic room. It is usual for only one parent to attend. In the theatre your child will be asked to sit on the trolley. The anaesthetic is usually given by an injection into a vein through a thin plastic tube called a cannula. This should not be painful because of the cream that was applied earlier. Your child will go to sleep very quickly. Sometimes we use anaesthetic ‘gas’ to put them to sleep. This is just as good as the injection but takes a bit longer to work – two or three minutes. It involves blowing a mixture of anaesthetic and oxygen across their mouth and nose through a mask. Your child should not find this unpleasant. You may notice he/she becomes a bit restless whilst going to sleep – this is a normal effect when breathing this anaesthetic. The anaesthetic doctor and theatre staff will talk you and your child through everything that they are doing.

Once your child is asleep, we ask you to go back into the waiting room until your child is awake in the recovery room. This may take 30 minutes or so.

### After the procedure

You and your child will need to stay in the recovery room for a couple of hours so we can make sure that they are well enough to go home. You will be asked to go to the recovery room to be with your child as soon as they are awake. They will be offered something to eat and drink. We will also give you instructions on how to look after your child’s mouth. When the nurses are happy you can take your child home via car or taxi (public transport is not allowed as your child may still be drowsy).

## Your questions answered

### 1. Is there anything I can do to help my child?

Keeping calm and appearing reassuring and confident are a great help to your child and to those treating him or her. Our aim is to make your child’s experience as calm and pain free as possible.

### 2. Will it be painful afterwards?

Your child may have some discomfort from their mouth or throat afterwards. This is normal, and usually

disappears within a couple of days. All the children will be given a dose of pain relief either before or after the anaesthetic. At home, things like Calpol (or equivalent) or Ibuprofen, which you can buy from the chemist, are useful.

### 3. Will the anaesthetic be safe and are there any side effects?

Yes modern anaesthetics are safe. Although there is always a small risk associated with having any operation or anaesthetic, we do take care to make everything as safe as possible. Firstly we ensure that the child is well before giving them an anaesthetic (having a cold or other untreated medical problem does increase the number of problems which can happen). We also use up-to-date monitoring equipment so that if a problem does arise we can spot it very quickly and treat it.


Most children recover quickly after anaesthetic and are back to their normal activities. Some children may get side effects however these are usually mild. These include headaches, nausea (feeling sick sometimes with vomiting) and a sore throat, these can be treated effectively. Other side effects generally just need time to wear off including dizziness and tiredness. The most serious complications are usually very rare but include severe allergic reactions and risk of death or disability. An anaesthetist will be with your child throughout their anaesthetic to monitor their progress and help them to wake up as comfortable as possible.

Your child's anaesthetist will meet you and assess your child on the day of the procedure. Please feel free to ask any questions which you may have about the anaesthetic at this time.

If you would like to read more information about anaesthetics please visit the Royal College of Anaesthetists website. This website has information leaflets to download for both parents and children about general anaesthesia.

[www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo).

**If you have any further questions, please ask one of the nursing or medical staff who will be happy to help.**

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(0161) 393 7732 / (0161) 393 7737 Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm.

For out of hours emergencies please call 111 or attend your local Accident and Emergency Department.

 <http://www.mft.nhs.uk/dental>

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