

# your anaesthetic care



MY CHILD  
NEEDS AN  
ANAESTHETIC



**AGB**

**ANAESTHETIC  
GROUP  
BALLARAT**

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## Preparing your child and yourself

It can be very distressing finding out that your child needs to have an operation. As well as worrying about the operation itself, it is very common to be worried about the anaesthetic, how your child will react and the risks involved.

Children are far less stressed on the day of surgery if they are given information beforehand. Several days before the procedure give your child a simple description of what needs to be done and what they can expect. Encourage them to ask questions, it is very important that no-one lies to your child about what to expect.

### Fasting

It is very important that your child has an empty stomach at the time of their anaesthetic. This is to reduce the slight risk of stomach contents regurgitating and entering your child's lungs with serious consequences.

It also helps to reduce the chance of your child feeling sick or vomiting after their anaesthetic.

It is for these reasons that your child must not eat or drink for several hours before the procedure.

1. If your child's operation is in the morning, he/she must not eat solid food or drink (including milk) after 2.30am. Small sips of water can be taken up to 2 hours before surgery, till 6.30am.
2. If your child's operation is in the afternoon, he/she must not eat solid food (including milk) after 7.30am. Again, small sips of water can be taken up to 2 hours before surgery, till 11.30am. If your child is under 6 months old, please contact the Anaesthetic Group Ballarat for specific fasting instructions.

## Premedication

Premedication is the term given to drugs before surgery to help with the anaesthetic. In the past drugs were often given to make children very sleepy before they even reached the theatre. This type of sedation is now only given very rarely as it tends to increase vomiting and make children take longer to wake up and be ready to go home. If you think your child will be extremely upset and likely to need sedation before being taken to theatre, please let us know in advance as these drugs take some time to work effectively.

Other drugs are commonly given to your child before their operation. The two commonest are painkillers to help reduce pain after the operation, for example Panadol and creams to numb the skin.

The creams - EMLA and Angel cream - are local anaesthetic creams that are put on the back of the hands to deaden the skin before a needle is inserted at the beginning of the anaesthetic. These creams take 20 - 60 minutes to work and they work much better if your child is encouraged not to pull them off! These creams work amazingly well but your child may still feel a bit of pushing.

## Meeting your Anaesthetist

Before your procedure, you will meet your Anaesthetist. Your Anaesthetist needs to assess the health of your child and discuss details of the anaesthetic, including any risks.

### Your Anaesthetist may want to know about

- + Previous operations and anaesthetics, especially any problems experienced
- + Any history of anaesthetic difficulties in the family - some rare problems can be inherited

- + Any history of chronic illnesses such as asthma, heart disease and epilepsy
- + Medications your child is taking
- + If your child has any loose or missing teeth
- + Whether there is a recent history of coughs or colds
- + Whether your child snores or sometimes stops breathing while asleep

Depending on these questions your Anaesthetist may wish to listen to your child's chest with a stethoscope and examine his/her mouth.

## In Theatre

In most cases you will be invited to come into theatre and can stay with your child until they are asleep. Your child may need to put on the special theatre clothes and you may need to put on a gown and hat.

There are two ways to start an anaesthetic for children. The first is to insert a needle into a vein in the back of the hand or at the elbow and inject drugs that send your child to sleep. This is very quick and simple but often children are very scared of needles and some children have veins that are very difficult to find.

The second way is to use the 'gas' or 'mask'. A mask is held over your child's face and they breathe a mixture of oxygen and anaesthetic gases until they fall asleep. This occurs very quickly: 30-60 seconds. The gas is very sweet smelling and not unpleasant although obviously many children don't like something new that they don't understand.

When your child loses consciousness, it usually happens very suddenly and they become very floppy. This is quite normal and does not mean anything is wrong. At this stage, one of the nursing staff will escort you out of the theatre and show you where to go or wait until your child awakens at the end of the procedure. Your Anaesthetist can give an approximation of how long the operation is likely to take.

## After the operation

When your child's surgery is completed, the anaesthetic drugs will be stopped and your child will begin to wake up. They are then transferred from the operating theatre to the recovery room where they will be given oxygen and the recovery nurses will observe your child until she/he is more awake. At this point they will usually call for you to be with your child. When your child is awake and comfortable, you and your child will return to the ward.

How your child feels after the operation is variable. Most children will be relaxed, slightly sleepy and not in any pain. However some children can become quite distressed when they wake up. This can be due to pain, but is often just a reaction to everything that has happened to them and usually settles down over the first hour.

Nausea and vomiting after anaesthetics is much less common than it used to be, but it does still occur. Vomiting once afterwards is common but if it persists we can use medications to help.

Once you get home, most children are fine. The amount of pain or discomfort they feel will depend on the type of surgery but painkillers will be organised before you leave hospital. Some children, rarely, may suffer problems with sleeping or unusual behaviour. This usually settles over a few days but if you are concerned please contact our Practice Nurse for advice on 03 5331 4888.

## What if my child is sick before their anaesthetic?

Infections are very common in children. If your child has an infection or illness in the days before an operation could you please contact our Practice Nurse on 03 5331 4888 for advice. Some infections may make your child's anaesthetic riskier and some may pose a risk of passing the infection on to other children.

### Any Questions

If you have any questions either before or after your anaesthetic please contact the **Anaesthetic Group Ballarat** on **03 5331 4888** or visit our website at **[www.agb.com.au](http://www.agb.com.au)**