

## Patient information factsheet

# Anaesthesia for neurosurgery

Most neurosurgical operations are carried out under general anaesthesia. This means that you will be put to sleep using anaesthetic drugs and woken up at the end of the operation. They are given by an anaesthetist (a doctor specially trained in anaesthesia). We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

### Is it safe to have a general anaesthetic?

Modern anaesthetics are very safe, and anaesthetics for neurosurgery are given to a very large number of patients who go on to make excellent recoveries without problems. We aim to assess each person on an individual basis beforehand, as the risk of a general anaesthetic will vary between individuals and will depend on the procedure and anaesthetic technique used.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists has produced a summary leaflet explaining the common events and risks involved in having a routine general anaesthetic. We will give this to you along with this factsheet, or it can be found under the 'Useful links' section of this factsheet.

Your anaesthetist will discuss with you the risks that they believe to be more significant for you. You should also speak to them about anything you feel is important.

### Pre-assessment clinic

We will invite you to our pre-assessment clinic before your scheduled operation so that we can assess your risk and ensure you are as fit as possible for surgery. A specially trained nurse will ask you about your medical history and perform some routine tests. Tell them if you or any blood relatives have ever had a reaction to an anaesthetic. If necessary, you may also be reviewed by a consultant anaesthetist in a separate clinic. Some people may need to have further investigations with other specialists.

We will review your medications and explain which ones to take and which not to take before your surgery. We will let you know what time you need to stop eating and drinking before the operation. We will also be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**If your health changes in any way after your preassessment appointment, please inform the admissions team.**

## Operations carried out under sedation

Some neurosurgical operations are done under local anaesthesia and sedation rather than general anaesthesia. This means you will still be conscious, but the anaesthetist will give you drugs that calm and relax you. The effects of sedation wear off very quickly after surgery, and some of the risks of general anaesthesia are avoided. We will discuss this with you if it applies to your operation. The Royal College of Anaesthetists has produced a summary leaflet explaining the benefits and risks of using sedation and what it may feel like. The link and QR code can be found in the 'Useful links' section of this factsheet.

## On the day of your operation

We will normally ask you to attend our 'day of surgery unit' on the morning of your operation. Here you will meet your anaesthetist, who will explain the type of anaesthetic you will receive and answer any further questions you may have. They will review your medical history and ask if you are prone to sickness after anaesthesia, if you have allergies, or if you cannot tolerate any medications. They are also likely to assess your mouth opening and neck movement and ask you if you have had any major dental work. They may ask if you are willing to receive a blood transfusion if required in an emergency. You must tell them if you have developed any signs of infection, such as a temperature, sore throat, runny nose or cough.

## Operating theatre

When it is time for your operation, we will take you from the ward to the anaesthetic room next to the operating theatre. We will carry out some further checks to confirm your identity and planned operation.

The anaesthetist and the anaesthetic assistant will attach routine monitoring and place a cannula (drip) in a vein, usually on your hand. If you are having a general anaesthetic, they will use this to inject drugs to put you to sleep. After this, we will move you to the operating theatre for surgery. We may need to put additional cannulae (drips) in your arms or feet once you are asleep. You may require a catheter (a flexible tube used to empty the bladder and collect urine in a drainage bag) if you are scheduled for an operation lasting more than four hours.

An anaesthetist will stay with you for the entire operation. You will also receive painkillers, anti-sickness medications and, if necessary, antibiotics, fluids and other medications during the operation.

## Recovery room

After your operation, the anaesthetist will turn off the anaesthetic, wake you up and take you to the recovery room. A nurse will look after you and make you as comfortable as possible. They will also record your blood pressure and heart rate and perform any other necessary checks. They will give you further pain relief if you need it.

We will then move you to an appropriate ward for the next stage of your care.

## Useful links

Royal College of Anaesthetists leaflets

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/brain-spine-and-nerve/wessex-neurological-centre/neurosurgery/patient-information-neurosurgery](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/brain-spine-and-nerve/wessex-neurological-centre/neurosurgery/patient-information-neurosurgery)

You may also scan the QR code below using your smartphone to access the leaflet:



## Contact us

You can contact our admissions teams on the following numbers:

### Neurosurgical

Telephone: **023 8120 4018** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm)

Telephone: **023 8120 6784** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm)

### Spinal

Telephone: **023 8120 5510** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Telephone: **023 8120 5244** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

If you have any queries on the day of your operation, please telephone our team at the day of surgery unit:

### Day of surgery unit

Telephone: **023 8120 3256** (Monday to Friday, 7am to 5pm)

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email [patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk)

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit [www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)

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