

# Having a general anaesthetic - instructions to follow before and after your operation

Alliance Day Surgery Units

Information for Patients

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## Introduction

You have agreed with your doctor that you are to have your operation under a general anaesthetic (GA). It is very important that you follow the instructions in this leaflet to prepare you for your operation and the instructions for after your operation.

## What is a general anaesthetic?

General anaesthesia is a state of controlled unconsciousness. During a GA, anaesthetic drugs are used to send you to sleep, so that you are not aware of your operation and don't move or feel pain while it's carried out. Anaesthetic is given as a liquid that is injected into your vein, normally in the back of your hand, through a thin plastic tube (cannula). It will be given to you by a specially trained doctor called an anaesthetist who is responsible for your wellbeing and safety during your operation.

## Eating and drinking instructions before your operation

It is important that you do **not** eat or drink (also known as 'fasting') for some time before your operation and GA to avoid complications. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come up to the back of your throat and go down into your lungs, which would cause damage.

The instructions you need to follow on the next page depend on what time your operation is planned for.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## For a morning operation

**Eating:** You must have **nothing** to eat after midnight the night before your operation. This includes sweets and chewing gum.

**Drinking:** You may drink **water only until 7am**. **Do not** drink anything else after this time.

## For an afternoon operation

**Eating:** You can have a light breakfast e.g. one slice of toast or cereal with tea/coffee **before 7.30am**. **Do not** eat anything after this time, including sweets and chewing gum.

**Drinking:** You may drink **water only until 11am**. **Do not** drink anything else after this time.

**If you continue to eat and drink after these times,  
your operation may be cancelled**

## Medication

Please take your normal prescribed medication **before 7am** on the morning of your operation unless you have been told not to at your pre-assessment appointment.

## What you need to do before your operation

- On the morning of your operation, please have a bath or shower. This will clean your skin and reduce the risk of infection.
- **Do not** smoke or drink alcohol for 24 hours before your operation.
- **Do not** wear contact lenses.
- **Do not** wear jewellery except for a plain wedding band only.
- **Do not** wear makeup on the day of your operation.
- **Do not** wear nail polish or acrylic nails. During your operation, your oxygen levels will be monitored with a probe placed on your finger. Nail polish and acrylic nails can interfere with this.
- Please make sure you have a supply of paracetamol and ibuprofen at home unless you are unable to take these for any reason.
- Please arrange for a responsible adult to collect you from the Day Surgery Unit after your operation. **You must also arrange to have a responsible adult stay with you for 24 hours after your operation.**
- Please bring a dressing gown and slippers (if you have them).

## What to do if you can't attend

If you are not able to attend for your operation or feel/are unwell (such as a cough, cold, high temperature or sickness and diarrhoea) on, or just before your operation date, you must telephone the Day Surgery Unit staff to let them know. Phone numbers can be found at the end of this leaflet.

## Coming to hospital

Please report to reception on the Day Surgery Unit at the time stated in your admission letter. Your nurse will collect you, take you through to the Unit and will let you know what time your operation will be. They will be able to answer any concerns or questions you may have.

## What do I need to bring with me?

- Admission letter.
- You may wish to bring something to read to pass the time.
- You are allowed a mobile phone but please keep it on silent. You must not use it to take any photographs whilst on the Day Surgery Unit.
- **Do not** bring any valuables.

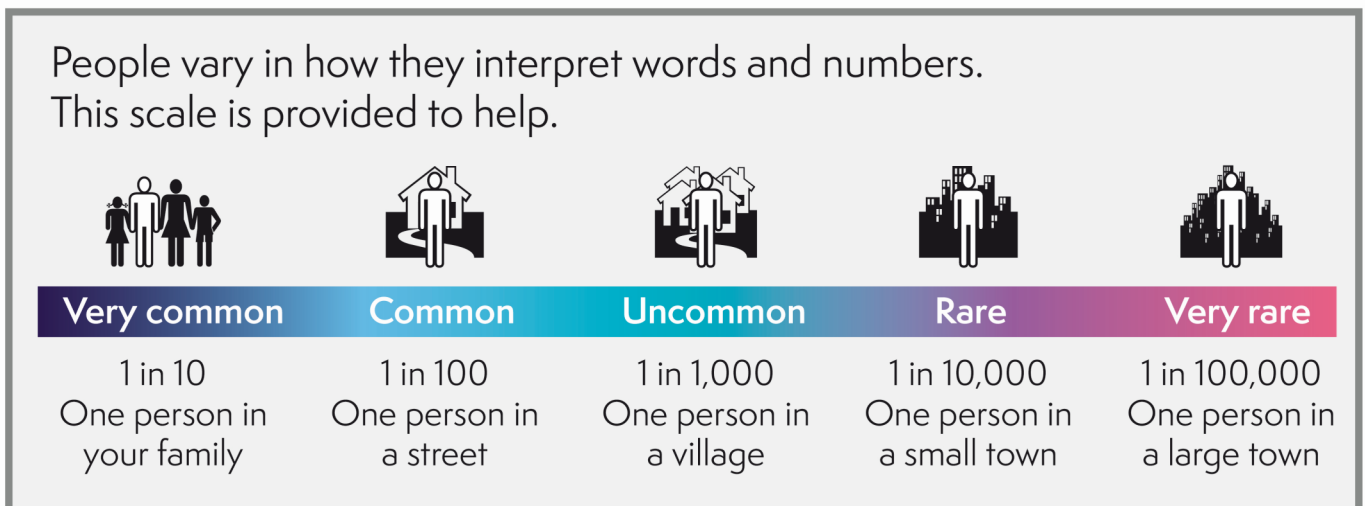
## After your operation

At the end of your operation, you will begin to wake up. You will be given oxygen through a face mask over your nose and mouth for a short while. You may experience some common side effects after your anaesthetic such as sickness, feeling cold/shivering or feeling confused. Don't worry, your nurse will recognise these side effects and look after you.

You will need to stay on the Day Surgery Unit until the nurses are satisfied that you have fully recovered (usually about 1 to 3 hours) after your operation.

## Understanding risks, side effects and complications

People vary in how they interpret words and numbers. This scale is provided to help:



In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Risk cannot be removed completely, but modern equipment, training and drugs have made it a much safer procedure in recent years.

To understand a risk, you must know how likely it is to happen, how serious it could be and how it can be treated. The risk to you as an individual will depend on whether you have any other illness or personal factors, such as smoking or being overweight. Your anaesthetist will be able to answer any questions you may have.

**Here are some very common and common side effects which may occur with a general anaesthetic:**

- Feeling sick and vomiting after surgery
- Feeling cold/shivering
- Sore throat
- Dizziness, blurred vision
- Headache
- Damage to the lips or tongue (usually minor)
- Itching
- Aches, pains and backache
- Confusion or memory loss

**The following are uncommon side effects and complications:**

- Chest infection
- Damage to teeth
- An existing medical condition getting worse
- Awareness (becoming conscious during your operation)

Information on rare or very rare side effects and complications not listed here can be found in the 'Where can I get more information' section at the end of this leaflet.

## **What if there are complications during or after my operation?**

You will be monitored very closely in theatre during your operation and on the Day Surgery Unit after your operation. It is uncommon for there to be any complications but if there are any concerns and you are not well enough to go home after your operation, the doctors and nurses will arrange a transfer to a main hospital nearby. This would ensure that you are monitored and cared for in the right place which have overnight facilities.

## Safety advice following a general anaesthetic

General anaesthetics can affect your memory, concentration and reflexes for 24 to 48 hours after your operation. Please rest at home for at least 24 hours after your GA. Do not go to work or school the day after your operation. It is important that you follow these instructions:

- You **must** have a responsible adult to take you home and to stay with you for the first 24 hours.
- **Do not** drive any vehicle including a bicycle for at least 24 hours.
- **Do not** operate any machinery or appliances that may cause harm or injury.
- **Do not** make important decisions or sign legal documents.
- **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** smoke.
- **Do not** take sleeping tablets.

## Contact details

The Day Surgery Units are open **Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm** (not bank holidays).

**Hinckley & District Hospital Day Surgery Unit:** 01455 441 845

**Pre-assessment Clinic:** 01455 441 847

**Melton Mowbray Hospital Day Surgery Unit:** 01664 854 904

**Loughborough Hospital Day Surgery Unit:** 01509 564 406

## Where can I get more information?

- <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo>
- Further information on side effects and complications:  
<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/document-store/anaesthesia-explained>

This publication includes information taken from the Royal College of Anaesthetists' (RCoA) patient information risk leaflet series but the RCoA has not reviewed this as a whole.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)