

SpeakUpTM: Anesthesia and Sedation

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia is the use of drugs to prevent pain during surgery or other medical procedures.



What is sedation?

Sedation is the use of drugs to relax you and may be used with anesthesia.

Types of anesthesia

The anesthesia you are given is based on your health, history, the procedure, and your choices.

Regional

produces a loss of feeling to a specific region of the body. A shot is given to numb the area that requires surgery.

Local

produces a loss of feeling to a small, specific area of the body. A shot is given to numb the area.

General

affects the entire body. You have no awareness or feeling. You may breathe gases or vapors through a mask or tube. Drugs may also be given through an intravenous (IV) tube in your vein.

Effects of sedation

Relaxed and awake.

You can answer questions and follow directions.

Relaxed and drowsy.

You may sleep through much of the procedure. You may hear sounds and voices around you. You can be easily awakened when spoken to or touched.

Drowsy to lightly sleeping.

You may have little or no memory of the procedure. Your breathing slows and you may be given oxygen. You may sleep until the drugs wear off.

Tell your doctor or anesthesia professional about

- General health issues and any recent changes
- Allergies to medicines, foods, latex, rubber or any other things
- Medical problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, asthma, acid reflux and sleep apnea
- Recent hospital admissions, surgeries or procedures
- Experience with anesthesia, especially any problems
- Any family history of anesthesia problems
- Any hearing or language concerns
- If you are or could be pregnant
- All drugs you are taking, including prescriptions, supplements, herbs and over-the-counter drugs
- Questions or concerns

Before surgery or a procedure

- Ask a friend or relative to be your advocate. They can help remember questions, write down answers, and remind you about directions.
- Arrange to take off work and other activities.
- Have someone care for your small children.
- An anesthesia professional will talk to you. This could be a physician anesthesiologist, a nurse anesthetist or an anesthesiologist assistant.
- Ask the anesthesia professional about the benefits and risks of anesthesia.
- Follow instructions for eating, drinking and taking medicines, especially instructions for when not to eat or drink.

After surgery or a procedure

You may feel sleepy. The drugs can stay in your body for up to 24 hours. Remember, it is important to follow the instructions provided after the procedure.

Don't:

- Drive a car, operate equipment or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours
- Make any important decisions or sign any legal documents until you recover
- Go back to your regular activities, such as work and exercise, until your doctor says it's OK

Do:

- Speak up if you have any questions
- Ask for written instructions. Know what signs should cause you to call the doctor.
- Ask how to contact someone in an emergency
- Ask what medicines you should or should not take
- Have a friend or family member take you home
- Take liquids first and slowly progress to a light meal
- Take it easy until you feel back to normal

Resources

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists: www.aana.com
American Society of Anesthesiologists: www.asahq.org