

# Children's dental treatment under general anaesthetic

## Information for parents and carers

### Appointments at:

Dental General Anaesthetic Unit  
Royal London Dental Hospital  
Whitechapel  
E1 1FR

If you need to change the appointment, please call 020 3594 6227.

### What is general anaesthesia?

- A general anaesthetic (GA) is medication that makes your child sleep (unconscious) and feel no pain during an operation or procedure.
- It is given by specialist hospital doctors called anaesthetists.

### Why is my child having a general anaesthesia?

- It is usually done when a child is young or nervous and needs a lot of treatment.
- The dentist feels that the child would not be able to have the treatment awake.

### How safe is general anaesthesia?

Serious problems are rare.

For a healthy child having a small operation:

- About 1 in 10 may get a headache or sore throat.
- About 1 in 10 may feel sick or dizzy.
- About 1 in 5 may feel upset or confused when they wake up.
- About 1 in 10,000 may have a serious allergic reaction.
- The risk of death from anaesthesia in healthy children having minor surgery is very low. It is less than 1 in 100,000.

## Before having the anaesthetic

### What should I tell my child about the anaesthesia?

- This depends on your child's age and how much you think they can understand.
- It may be enough to explain that some of their teeth are not healthy and need to be taken out before they start to hurt.
- You can explain that the doctor will give them medicine that makes them go to sleep while their teeth are taken out or fixed.
- When it is finished, they will wake up.
- Older children may want to know more.
- Do encourage your child to talk about the operation. Books, games and stories can help.
- Our hospital may have play staff on the ward who can explain things. They can help your child talk about what's going to happen through play.

### What should I do if my child is unwell?

- If your child has a cough, cold, fever, vomiting, or diarrhoea, the anaesthetic should be delayed.
- This is to keep your child safe until they are well again.
- Please contact us using the phone number for the hospital that is listed at the top of this leaflet.

## Not eating before the appointment

### Why is it important for my child not to eat or drink before the anaesthetic?

- If there is food or liquid in your child's stomach during the anaesthetic, it can be dangerous.
- If there is food or liquid in the stomach, it could come up and go into the lungs.

### Morning appointment

- Your child **must not eat anything for six hours** before their appointment.
- For a morning appointment they **must not eat after midnight**.
- They can have **SIPS OF PLAIN WATER ONLY** until you arrive at hospital.

### Afternoon appointment

- Your child **must not eat anything for six hours** before their appointment.
- For an afternoon appointment, they **must not eat after 7am**.
- They **must not go to school before the appointment**.
- They can have **SIPS OF PLAIN WATER ONLY** until you arrive at hospital.

## Where can I park on the day?

- There is no patient parking on the hospital site, and nearby street parking may not be available for the amount the time you will need.
- You may be able to arrange private parking nearby in advance.

## On the anaesthetic day

- **A PARENT OR CARER MUST COME TO THE APPOINTMENT** with the child.
- **Do not bring other children** with you on the day.
- You may be at the hospital for up to six hours. You will need to arrange childcare for your other children.
- You must remove any nail varnish, earrings and jewellery that your child has.
- Do not dress your child in tight clothing.
- Your child may bring their favourite doll or teddy bear to comfort them.

## At the hospital

- You should expect to be at the hospital for about six hours.
- Time is needed to prepare your child for the anaesthetic and for your child to recover afterwards.
- The Nurses will take your child's temperature, weigh them and check that they have fasted.
- The Anaesthetist will talk to you about the anaesthetic.
- The Dentist will talk to you about the dental treatment. If you have any questions, please ask them.

## How will my child go to sleep?

- There are two ways of giving the anaesthetic:
  - Anaesthetic gas that they breathe through a mask
  - An injection in the back of the hand. Anaesthetic cream will be placed on your child's hands an hour before to make the skin numb.
- You will be able to discuss how your child will go to sleep with the anaesthetist at the hospital.

## Can I stay with my child while the anaesthetic is given?

- One parent/carer can stay in the anaesthetic room until your child is asleep.
- You will not be able to stay with the child during their treatment.

## How long will the treatment take?

- The treatment takes between 45 minutes to an hour depending on how many teeth are being fixed or removed.
- You will wait in the ward while they are asleep.
- You will be called into the recovery room once your child wakes up.

## After the anaesthetic

### What will my child feel like?

- When your child first wakes up, they are likely to be a bit confused and may be tearful.
- They will have been given local anaesthesia (numbing injection) near the teeth being treated.
- This can feel strange, and they may not like it.
- They will be given a painkiller before and during the anaesthetic to help reduce the pain afterwards.
- Most of the children settle quickly and can soon have a drink and some soft food.

### When can I take my child home?

- You will be able to take your child home as soon as the hospital staff check they have recovered enough.
- Generally, the longer the anaesthetic takes, the longer the recovery time is.
- Usually, they will make sure your child has drunk, eaten and gone to the toilet before discharging them.
- Once your child is ready to leave the hospital, please make sure you have appropriate transport to go home, preferably by car or taxi.

## Get more information about children's general anaesthetics

Royal College of Anaesthetists: [www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo)



## Contact our service

Call us on 020 3316 8353 (Monday to Friday 8.45 to 11.30am and 2 to 4.45pm).

## Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net).

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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