

Dental treatment under General Anaesthetic for Children

Your child is due to have dental treatment under a general anaesthetic

A general anaesthetic ensures that your child is unconscious and free of pain during their dental treatment.

What should I do before the operation?

- Your child must not eat for at least 6 hours before their operation.
- Your child is only allowed to drink plain water up to 2 hours before the procedure. You must not give your child milk, juice or fizzy drinks. Failure to comply can lead to difficulties with breathing (aspiration) during a general anaesthetic. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS WILL RESULT IN YOUR APPOINTMENT BEING CANCELLED.**
- If your child takes medicines, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team.
- If you have other children, please arrange for another adult to look after them.
- Tell the dentist or anaesthetist if your child has any wobbly teeth.
- We recommend old, loose, comfortable clothing (with sleeves that can be rolled up) / pyjamas and flat shoes.
- It is necessary that the child's legal guardian/ an adult with parental responsibility are with them on the day of the operation to ensure they give permission for the procedure.
- Transport home should be arranged prior to the hospital appointment. Public transport eg. bus, train should not be used.

What should I expect on the day of the operation?

When you arrive at the hospital you will meet the dentist, the anaesthetist and the nursing team. They will talk to you about the operation and discuss how your child will go to sleep. The anaesthetist may use breathing gas or a small tube in the back of your child's hand to put them to sleep.

Some children may be offered a pre-medication drink to help them relax before the anaesthetic.

Will my child be in pain afterwards?

There is always a risk of pain, swelling and infection after teeth are removed. Your child is given pain relief once they are asleep and if your child is having teeth removed, we may numb the gums. It is important not to bite the lips or cheeks while they are numb. We would recommend that you give your child pain relief as required following the operation.

Will it bleed?

Some blood in the saliva is completely normal after teeth are removed, however bleeding is more likely to happen if your child rinses their mouth, spits or pokes the holes where the teeth have been removed. It is important that you encourage your child to drink water and swallow their saliva.

We sometimes put a socket dressing in the holes where the teeth have been removed, this is to help the bleeding to stop. The gauze will dissolve within two weeks, if it falls out before this, you do not need to do anything.

Can we brush teeth after?

It is important that you keep your child's mouth clean by brushing teeth as normal the day after the operation. If your child is able to, we would recommend salt water mouthwashes two times per day for five days, 24 hours after tooth removal.

What will happen after the operation?

For the next 24 hours we recommend your child:

- Must be with a responsible adult that can take care of them
- Rests at home and does not participate in sports
- Eats a soft, cool diet eg. mashed potatoes; pasta
- Drinks water regularly
- Is given pain relief as required

Side effects

In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Most children recover quickly and are soon back to normal after their operation. Some children may feel sick or have a sore throat afterwards.

For a child in good health having minor surgery (dental procedure):

- More than 1 child in 10 experiences a headache or a sore throat
- More than 1 child in 10 experiences sickness or dizziness
- More than 1 child in 10 becomes agitated on waking
- Around 1 child in 10,000 develops a serious allergic reaction to the anaesthetic
- The risk of death from anaesthesia for healthy children having minor or moderate non-emergency surgery is less than 1 in 100,000. See the following leaflet available via the College website for further information: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/media/3541>

Child friendly leaflets are available to download at: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo>. If you have any questions about your child's dental treatment or anaesthetic speak to your dentist.

If you require this document in another language, large print, braille or audio version, please contact your healthcare provider.

