



Anaesthesia – Needle or Gas? Information for Parents

What is an anaesthetic?

When a child needs a procedure in the operating department, they will almost certainly need to go to sleep. This is called a general anaesthetic (GA).

How is the anaesthetic given?

There are two main options to get the anaesthetic started: with a needle (IV) or with gas.

Which way is preferable?

Both methods of giving anaesthetic have advantages and disadvantages, and neither is better than the other. Your anaesthetist will be happy to discuss the options with you. Whatever method is used, the nurses and doctors will try their best to make the day go smoothly.

Will my child have a pre-med?

Many of the younger children also have a pre-med before they are brought to the operating department. This is a liquid to swallow, and usually contains a drug called midazolam. This will generally help your child to relax, but you may not see much difference. Later on, your child may remember little of the anaesthetic.

Children with Glaucoma

If your child has glaucoma, the doctors will often choose to use the IV type of anaesthetic if possible. This is because most anaesthetic drugs, including gas, make the eye softer and can make it difficult to measure the correct eye pressure. Only ketamine, which is given by IV, keeps the eye pressure the same. However, on occasion it is not possible use the IV method, and the doctors may have to use gas instead.