



Patient information: surgical services

# General anaesthetic

## What is general anaesthesia?

General anaesthesia is a state of controlled unconsciousness during which you are completely asleep and feel nothing. Your anaesthetist will meet you before your operation and will:

- **discuss with you** which types of anaesthetic can be used, and their risks and benefits.
- **decide with you** which anaesthetic would be best for you.

## What are the risks associated with a general anaesthetic?

All procedures have associated risks. Sight and life-threatening complications can occur, but are extremely rare. Less common complications include urinary retention and shivering. You can discuss any specific concerns you may have with your surgeon or anaesthetist.

1. **Sore throat:** About 40% of people develop a sore throat after general anaesthesia. This usually resolves when you start to eat and drink again following your operation.
2. **Dental injury:** Around 1 in 4,500 people have dental damage from the breathing tube insertion.

3. **Nausea and vomiting:** About 1 in 3 people feel sick after a general anaesthetic. You will be given anti-sickness medications routinely as part of your anaesthetic.

4. **Awareness:** Most studies suggest that around 1 person per 20,000 patients under anaesthetic experience some kind of awareness. The anaesthetist will monitor you continuously while you are under the general anaesthetic to minimise this risk.

5. **Serious complications:** Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction to a medication. It occurs in less than one in every 10,000 anaesthetics. Death is very rare (approximately 1 per 100,000 general anaesthetics).

## Will I receive adequate pain relief?

Good pain relief is essential and painkillers are given routinely as part of the anaesthetic so that you are comfortable after your operation. As well as helping with any pain, this also helps you recover more quickly. Your anaesthetist will most likely discuss different pain relief methods with you

before your surgery so you can make an informed decision about which will suit you best. Extra pain relief can be given when you wake up if you need it.

For more information on your anaesthetic please follow this link: <http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo> or see our more detailed leaflet, 'Anaesthesia explained for Moorfields Eye Hospital'. Friends of Moorfields charity have sponsored a series of information videos about the different types of anaesthetics we use at Moorfields. Please follow this link below: [www.friendsofmoorfields.org.uk/information-videos-about-anaesthetics/](http://www.friendsofmoorfields.org.uk/information-videos-about-anaesthetics/)

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Revision number: 4

Approval date: September 2019

Review date: September 2022

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### **Moorfields Direct telephone helpline**

Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday–Friday, 8.30am–9pm

Saturday, 9am–5pm

Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

### **Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**

Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325

Email: [moorfields.pals@nhs.net](mailto:moorfields.pals@nhs.net)  
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

### **Your right to treatment within 18 weeks**

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit [www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs)

