Anesthesia for Diagnostic and Therapeutic Imaging:  
A Guide for Patients

Why did my doctor order anesthesia for my test?

For some of the tests performed in the Imaging department, the patient is required to remain perfectly still in order to obtain the best pictures. The better the pictures, the easier it will be for the radiologist to determine your diagnosis. Anesthesia is a “state of deep sleep” that allows the patient to remain still.

Who are anesthesiologists?

Today’s anesthesiologists are physicians who complete a four-year college program, four years of medical school, and four more years of anesthesiology residency. They apply their knowledge of medicine to fulfill their primary role in the procedure room, which is not only to ensure your comfort during the test, but also to make informed medical judgments to protect you.

What will the anesthesiologist need to know?

Anesthesia affects your entire body, so it is important for your anesthesiologist to know as much about you as possible. Just before your procedure, an anesthesiologist will carefully evaluate you and your medical history and will inquire about your recent medications. In addition, the anesthesiologist will inform you about the benefits and risks of anesthesia. Then, after all of your questions and concerns have been answered, you will be asked to sign a written consent to proceed with anesthesia for your procedure.
How will anesthesia be given?

Anesthetic agents can be administered in several ways. Intravenous medication is most commonly used because it works quickly and is short acting. The choice of which method to begin anesthesia will be made by the anesthesiologist based on you/your child’s history and physical condition.

What does the anesthesiologist do?

Your anesthesiologist is personally responsible for your comfort and well-being before, during and after your procedure. In the procedure room, the anesthesiologist will direct your anesthesia and manage vital functions, including heart rate and rhythm, blood pressure, and breathing. He or she will regulate the anesthesia so that you/your child will be comfortable until your procedure is complete.

Frequently, people requiring procedures may have other medical conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, arthritis, or heart problems. Because of the pre-procedural evaluation, the anesthesiologist will be aware of these conditions and well prepared to treat them during you/your child’s procedure and immediately afterward.

Who is present during the procedure?

A registered nurse specially trained to assist the anesthesiologist in the area where your test will be performed is present in the room.

There will also be 1-2 specially trained technologists who will assist in completing your procedure.

Can I have a parent or family member with me during the test?

A family member and/or parents of our pediatric patients are usually allowed to stay with the patient up until the anesthesia is given. We want to make sure that all of your questions and concerns have been answered before the procedure begins. Occasionally, parents are asked to leave the room temporarily while an IV is started on their child.
Once the procedure and anesthesia has started, family members and/or parents will be taken to the waiting room. The PACU (post anesthesia care unit), also known as the recovery room, is just outside the waiting room. You will be notified by the Imaging Registered Nurse or Technologist that your family member’s procedure is complete and they are in the PACU. If it is your child having anesthesia, only one parent will be allowed in the recovery room at a time.

**After the test, what can I expect?**

You/your child will be taken to the PACU (recovery room) and monitored until awake and ready to go back up to the room. Although the effect of anesthesia takes only a few moments to begin, the time it takes to recover can vary from patient to patient. This means that patients will awaken from anesthesia at different rates. Most patients will be fully alert upon arriving in the recovery room while others may be sleepy or feel groggy for hours after their procedure.

Nausea and vomiting are occasional side effects after anesthesia. The anesthesiologist will order any needed medication to help keep you comfortable as you recover from the anesthesia and procedure.

**This is an outpatient procedure; do I have to be as careful in preparing as I do with a hospital admission?**

Although outpatient procedures are usually considered simple tests, the anesthesia is not considered simple. It is very important to follow the pre-procedural directions prior to your procedure. It is also very important to closely follow the instructions concerning food and liquid intake.

**What if I have other questions or need to reschedule my appointment?**

If you have any questions, concerns, or need to reschedule your appointment you may call (310) 784-6326 M-F from 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. and speak to an Imaging RN.

Reference based on 2006 American Society of Anesthesiologists & American Radiology Nurses Association guidelines

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