



**The Leeds  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust

Endoscopy Unit

# Having a General Anaesthetic

Information for  
patients



This leaflet aims to give basic information and guidance to help you prepare for your general anaesthetic. It will help you understand what will happen before, during and after. For more details that are specific to your procedure, please read the 'A guide to the test' booklet provided.

After reading this booklet, if you have concerns or questions, please contact a member of the Endoscopy Pre-assessment team. Contact information can be found at the end of this booklet.

## **What is a General Anaesthetic?**

During a general anaesthetic, medicines injected or inhaled are used to send you into a sleep like state. You are unconscious and unaware during our procedure. You do not move or feel pain, while the procedure is happening.

## **What happens before my procedure?**

You will be sent a letter detailing the date and place of your procedure. Detailed information about the procedure, what preparations you need to do and useful contact information will be included.

Some patients are given a disinfecting shower wash and nasal cream to use before the procedure for several days. This helps protect you from infection such as MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus). The instructions of how to use this will be given with the wash / cream. A pre-assessment nurse will ask you certain questions to decide if you need this or not.

Before your procedure, you will be invited, either in person, or over the telephone to a pre-assessment clinic. This is to see if you are safe and healthy to have a general anaesthetic. This will be a chance for you to ask any questions you may have.

**At the clinic, the nurse will ask you in detail about your health including:**

- your medical history;
- medications that you are currently taking;
- any allergies / reactions that you may have;
- your activity levels and any physical or mental health problems; and
- any previous problems with anaesthetic.

**Either at the same time or a later date, we may:**

- weigh and measure your height;
- arrange any blood tests required;
- perform an ECG (heart tracing); and
- take swabs to check for any infection.

## What should I bring on the day?

A consent form should have been sent to you already along with your appointment letters. Please bring this with you and read through it before you come in. The endoscopist will discuss the consent form with you on the day for you to sign.

You may bring your own gown and slippers with you on the day. Your belongings should stay with you throughout so please bring them into the procedure room. We can provide a carrier for these.

You will be given a hospital gown to put on the day and we will discuss what underwear you can or cannot wear. You may be given elastic stockings to put on to help reduce the risk of blood clots. These can feel tight on your legs.

If you take medications, please bring these with you along with any inhalers, GTN spray or insulin you may require. If you have obstructive sleep apnoea and use a CPAP machine, bring this with you.

If the plan is for you to stay in hospital afterwards, please bring clothes, toiletries and any medications you take with you.

## What happens on the day on my procedure?

On arrival, you will be greeted by staff who will confirm your details, make sure no information has changed since your pre-assessment and will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels and temperature.

The Endoscopy department will have given you instructions on when to stop eating and drinking. These can be different depending on what procedure you are having. Please follow these instructions carefully.

If you are taking medications, you should continue to take them as normal unless we have asked you not to; for example, if you are taking anticoagulants to thin your blood, medications for diabetes or iron tablets, we may give you certain instructions to stop / adjust these.

If you are a woman of child bearing age, we may ask for a urine sample. This is so we can take a pregnancy test with your consent.

If you smoke, it is advised that you do not smoke on the day of your procedure. This will help avoid any breathing problems during your anaesthetic.

If you feel unwell when you are due to come in, please telephone the Endoscopy department. Contact information can be found at the end of this booklet.

You can wear your glasses, hearing aids or dentures. These may need to be removed, once you are in the procedure room. It is best to leave jewellery and any valuables you may have at home. If you cannot remove your jewellery, we can cover them with tape. If you have a lip or tongue piercing, please remove them if possible. **Please remove nail varnish as this can interfere with our equipment to monitor your oxygen levels.**

## Meeting your anaesthetist

On the day of your procedure, you will meet your anaesthetist. They are doctors with specialist training who will:

- discuss types of anaesthetic that are suitable for your procedure;
- discuss the risks of anaesthesia with you; and
- any concerns or questions that you may have.

## What happens in the procedure room?

After you have changed into a gown, staff will collect you and take you to the procedure room. They will introduce themselves and do routine checks including confirming your name, date of birth and if you have any allergies. We will then attach leads to your body that measure your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen levels. If you have any concerns please speak to the staff.

The anaesthetist will give you medication into your vein through a cannula. A cannula is a small plastic tube that is placed into your vein. This may be done before you enter the procedure room. To place the cannula, we will use a tight band around your arm that makes the vein more obvious.

For you to be asleep during the procedure, the anaesthetist will put medications through the cannula and can place a light mask covering your nose and mouth to breathe in anaesthetic gases.

The team in the procedure room will make sure you are in a comfortable position. Your heels, knees and elbows will be cushioned and supported. The team will stay with you throughout, whilst you are asleep. Once the procedure is completed, you will start to wake up.

## **What should I expect afterwards?**

After the procedure, you will be taken into the recovery area. Recovery staff will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels and make sure you are comfortable.

When you start to wake up, you may feel drowsy. You may have to be given extra oxygen through a face mask or small plastic tubes that sit underneath your nostrils.

If you have removed your glasses, dentures or hearing aids, we will return them to you once you are fully awake. Your clothes and property will be placed underneath the trolley you are laying on. You may get changed once fully awake.

After a general anaesthetic, certain side effects are usually expected and staff will help to treat and prevent these. Common side effects can include:

- feeling sick (nausea);
- feeling tired and dizzy;
- sore throat;
- shivering and feeling cold; and
- discomfort.

There are known adverse effects from the intravenous drugs administered during the procedure, ranging from mild and common to rare and serious. These include: headaches, nausea, fainting, depression of respiratory and nervous system, which may result in aspiration pneumonia, anaphylaxis and coma. Although these serious complications are rare, they are common in patients with deeper sedation and / or general anaesthesia.

Recovery time can vary from person to person. It may take up to 4 hours, depending on how you feel. You will be discharged, once staff are satisfied with your condition.

Most patients go home on the same day as their procedure, once they have recovered. If the plan is for you to stay in hospital, this will be arranged and discussed with you before your procedure.

## You will be discharged home or onto a ward once:

- you are fully awake;
- you have had something to eat or drink;
- any discomfort you may have is controlled;
- you have been seen by an Anaesthetist / Endoscopist; and
- you have passed urine.

**If you have not passed urine within 6 hours after being discharged, please phone the Endoscopy Unit or attend your nearest Emergency department.**

The anaesthetic can make some people slightly confused, forgetful and unsteady afterwards. If you are returning home after the general anaesthetic, **you will need to organise a responsible adult to collect you from the department, take you home by car or taxi and to stay with you for 24 hours.**

## You are advised for 24 hours after your general anaesthetic NOT TO:

- drive;
- operate any machinery;
- drink alcohol, take sleeping medication or recreational drugs;
- go to work;
- sign any legal documents; and
- have a bath / cook unsupervised.

## Contact us

### Administration Team:

- **Telephone: 0113 3920692**

Monday - Friday, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm (except for bank holidays).

Please contact this number if you would like to cancel your appointment. Also, contact this number if you require an interpreter or transport.

### Pre-assessment Nursing Team:

- **Telephone: (0113) 3922585**

Monday - Friday, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm (except for bank holidays).

Please contact this number if you would like advice on your medication or have any medical questions / concerns.



## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

*Your views matter*



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Developed by: Suzanne Davies, Sister

Reviewed by: Suzanne Jackson, Endoscopy Pre-assessment Sister  
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