



Medical conditions

Some medical conditions may affect your recovery from surgery.



Diabetes

Good control of blood sugar will improve wound healing and reduce your risk of infections. If you are diabetic, work with your GP and Diabetes team to try and get your blood sugars as well controlled as possible.



Anaemia

You may have some blood tests before surgery, one of which looks at your blood count. It is important to treat any anaemia to help your recovery, especially if you may lose

some blood during your operation. Most common anaemias can be treated with iron tablets, but you might need an iron infusion if your levels are very low.

Reducing worry and offering practical support

Coming into hospital for surgery can be a worrying time. Here are some suggestions that might help you to worry less:

- talk to your perioperative team about what to expect around the time of surgery and the days and weeks afterwards. Read some of our information about anaesthesia to help explain it
- find out visiting times so relatives and friends can see you
- bring in music with headphones, devices such as iPads, or something to read as there may be some waiting around
- learn some deep breathing or relaxation techniques
- find out exactly when you can eat and drink before surgery so you don't feel too thirsty before your operation

- arrange for someone to look after you at home afterwards if you can. If that is not possible ask your team to help make some arrangements for help when you go home, if you need it
- set things up at home to make it easier for you to get about afterwards if you will be less mobile. You might be able to borrow some equipment from the hospital or Red Cross to help you
- stock up with easy to cook foods for when you get back home
- have some simple painkillers at home and make sure you have plenty of your usual medication.

For a fit person having a planned procedure under a general anaesthetic, the risks are very low. Your anaesthetist will discuss with you any additional risks you may have. You will have time to discuss these with your anaesthetist and decide together what is best suited to you.

A study of over 15,000 patients in the NHS showed high levels of satisfaction after anaesthesia. We hope that by finding out more about anaesthesia and preparing your body well for surgery, you will improve your chances of the best possible outcome from your operation.

You can find more information leaflets by visiting our website at www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo.

You will also be able to tell us what you think of our information and suggest any ideas to help you further.

Royal College of Anaesthetists, Churchill House, 35 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4SG
Tel 020 7092 1500 | Email comms@rcoa.ac.uk | Website www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo

RCoA
Royal College of Anaesthetists



Anaesthesia: what you need to know

Anaesthetists are highly trained doctors.

Did you know that two thirds of patients will come into contact with an anaesthetist during their stay in hospital?



Perioperative medicine is the care of patients before, during and after surgery. As the largest single hospital specialty, anaesthetists are uniquely placed to lead the future development of perioperative medicine.

Who are anaesthetists and what do we do?

You may meet some of us when we:

- teach and train other doctors, nurses and theatre staff
- have other roles in hospital management.
- assess patients for their surgery preoperatively
- provide pain relief in labour and anaesthesia for caesarean sections
- run the intensive care unit
- stabilise critically ill patients before they reach hospital and in the emergency department
- transfer seriously ill patients between hospitals
- provide anaesthesia and sedation for procedures out of the operating theatre such as endoscopy, dental surgery and radiology scans
- manage postoperative pain, acute pain and long term pain problems, including back and cancer pain

When you receive your anaesthetic, a trained anaesthetist will be with you at all times.

You might hear the term perioperative care or POM. This means all the care you receive from the moment you are considered

for surgery until after you have had your operation and gone home. Anaesthetists take a central role in co-ordinating this process.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists also supports research to improve quality in perioperative care. More information about perioperative medicine can be found at: www.rcoa.ac.uk/perioperativemedicine.

Getting your body ready for surgery

This is an opportunity to make some positive changes to your general health that will also improve your chances of a swift and smooth recovery. There are a number of things you can do to help get your body and mind in the best condition for your surgery and anaesthetic.



We know that if you smoke you are at higher risk of complications after surgery. The good news is that stopping smoking before surgery can dramatically improve things like your length of stay in hospital, wound healing and lung function. Your GP and perioperative team will be able to offer help in reducing or stopping smoking, so ask them about the best options for you.



Healing after surgery puts extra demand on your heart and lungs. If they are used to working harder (i.e. if you are active), then they will be better able to meet this demand and improve your chances of a good recovery. Try and increase your activity levels, even if it is only for a few minutes a day, e.g. walking, gardening, swimming, cycling. All activities which make you feel a bit out of breath three or more times a week are helpful. Improving fitness has also been shown to help if you need other treatment with your surgery for example, chemotherapy.



Alcohol has many effects on the body. It reduces the liver's ability to produce the building blocks for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended alcohol limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery.

