**What is anesthesia?**

Anesthesia is the use of drugs to prevent pain during surgery or other medical procedures.

**Types of anesthesia**

The anesthesia you are given is based on your health, history, the procedure, and your choices.

- **Regional**
  - Produces a loss of feeling to a specific region of the body. A shot is given to numb the area that requires surgery.

- **Local**
  - Produces a loss of feeling to a small, specific area of the body. A shot is given to numb the area.

- **General**
  - Affects the entire body. You have no awareness or feeling. You may breathe gases or vapors through a mask or tube. Drugs may also be given through an intravenous (IV) tube in your vein.

**Effects of sedation**

- **Relaxed and awake.**
  - You can answer questions and follow directions.

- **Relaxed and drowsy.**
  - You may sleep through much of the procedure. You may hear sounds and voices around you. You can be easily awakened when spoken to or touched.

- **Drowsy to lightly sleeping.**
  - You may have little or no memory of the procedure. Your breathing slows and you may be given oxygen. You may sleep until the drugs wear off.

**Tell your doctor or anesthesia professional about**

- General health issues and any recent changes
- Allergies to medicines, foods, latex, rubber or any other things
- Medical problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, asthma, acid reflux and sleep apnea
- Recent hospital admissions, surgeries or procedures
- Experience with anesthesia, especially any problems
- Any family history of anesthesia problems
- Any hearing or language concerns
- If you are or could be pregnant
- All drugs you are taking, including prescriptions, supplements, herbs and over-the-counter drugs
- Questions or concerns

**Before surgery or a procedure**

- Ask a friend or relative to be your advocate. They can help remember questions, write down answers, and remind you about directions.
- Arrange to take off work and other activities.
- Have someone care for your small children.
- An anesthesia professional will talk to you. This could be a physician anesthesiologist, a nurse anesthetist or an anesthesiologist assistant.
- Ask the anesthesia professional about the benefits and risks of anesthesia.
- Follow instructions for eating, drinking and taking medicines, especially instructions for when not to eat or drink.

**After surgery or a procedure**

- You may feel sleepy. The drugs can stay in your body for up to 24 hours. Remember, it is important to follow the instructions provided after the procedure.

  - **Do:**
    - Speak up if you have any questions
    - Ask for written instructions. Know what signs should cause you to call the doctor.
    - Ask how to contact someone in an emergency
    - Ask what medicines you should or should not take
    - Have a friend or family member take you home
    - Take liquids first and slowly progress to a light meal
    - Take it easy until you feel back to normal

  - **Don’t:**
    - Drive a car, operate equipment or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours
    - Make any important decisions or sign any legal documents until you recover
    - Go back to your regular activities, such as work and exercise, until your doctor says it’s OK

**Resources**

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists: www.aana.com
American Society of Anesthesiologists: www.asahq.org

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients become active in their care.

**Nearly 40 million anesthetics are administered annually in the U.S.**

- American Society of Anesthesiologists

**Sedation is the use of drugs to relax you and may be used with anesthesia.**