

Pediatric General Anesthesia

A hospital visit can be an anxious time for you and your child. You both will meet many doctors, nurses and other people who will do their best to make your experience a positive one.

Anesthesiologists are doctors with special training in the anesthetic care of patients. Boys Town anesthesiologists are concerned with many aspects of your child's care. Their main task is to provide safe, optimal conditions during surgery and to make the entire hospital stay as pleasant and comfortable as possible.

As a parent you should realize what anesthesia is and why it is necessary. Specifically, anesthesia is a state of controlled unconsciousness produced by special medications and gases that have temporary effects on every organ of the body. Because the medications and gases are being regulated constantly during the operation by the anesthesiologist, the child will remain in this special kind of controlled unconsciousness and will feel no pain, will not wake up during the operation and will remember nothing of the procedure. During surgery, anesthesiologists carefully individualize and regulate the child's anesthetic agents and skillfully reverse the effects of the medications at the completion of the operation.

Preparing your child for his or her operation should begin at home several days before surgery. It is important that you tell your child as much as possible about the operation beforehand. A parent should tell the child the truth as gently and honestly as possible. This will increase the faith and trust the child has in you as well as the medical team. You will receive a preoperative phone call by a nurse who will go over important information and instructions regarding the hospital visit. The nurse will be happy to address any special concerns with you.

Upon arrival to the hospital, most children will receive medicine by mouth that will provide sedation and control nausea and pain. Parental composure is essential. Nothing calms a child more than a confident parent. Reassure your child that you will be right there waiting for him or her after the operation. Your anesthesiologist will visit with you regarding your child's health history as it pertains to anesthesia and discuss an anesthetic plan tailored to your child's individual needs.

Following your child's operation, every attempt is made to get your child back to you as soon and as safely as possible. Different children awaken from anesthesia at differing rates. Some children may be fully alert upon arriving at the recovery room. Other may be groggy for hours after surgery. Although outpatient anesthesia is much safer these days, it still inflicts stress on the body and can cause your child to have a "sick" feeling. Nausea and vomiting are occasional side effects after surgery and anesthesia, usually from the medications given to alleviate pain. Other side effects are a sore throat or a noisy, barking cough, both of which should be gone within a day. If you have any concerns about your child's recovery, you should feel free to discuss them with your anesthesiologist.