

Having an operation with anaesthesia

An easy read booklet

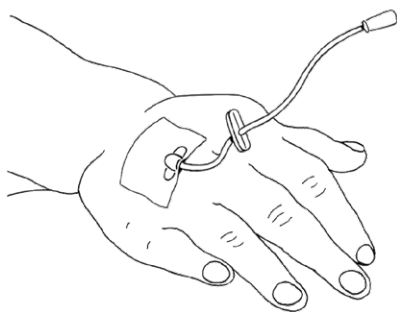
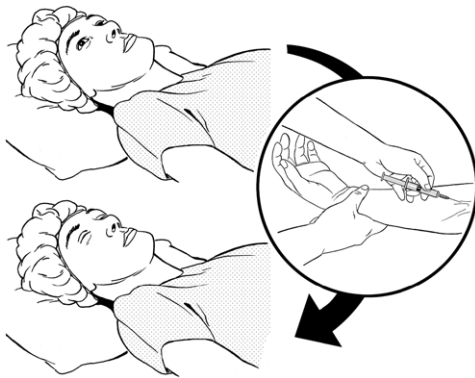
Having an operation can sound scary, but there are things you can do to help you feel less worried.

This booklet explains some words you might find difficult.

It also shows you what to expect and how to get ready for an operation.

We hope you find it helpful.

Having an operation with anaesthesia



What the difficult words mean

Anaesthesia (sounds like 'An-ess-thee-zee-a') stops you feeling pain during an operation.

General anaesthetics (sounds like 'An-ess-th-tics') – drugs that send you to sleep so you feel nothing during the operation.

Pre-assessment clinic – a clinic at the hospital where the anaesthetic doctor/nurse will see you before the operation.

Cannula (sounds like 'can-you-la') – a thin plastic tube that is put in the back of your hand to give you drugs or fluids.

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Who will look after you at the hospital

You will meet many people at the hospital. You may wonder who they are and what they do.



The anaesthetist – (sounds like 'an-ees-th-tist') a doctor trained in giving drugs that stop pain and make you sleep during the operation.

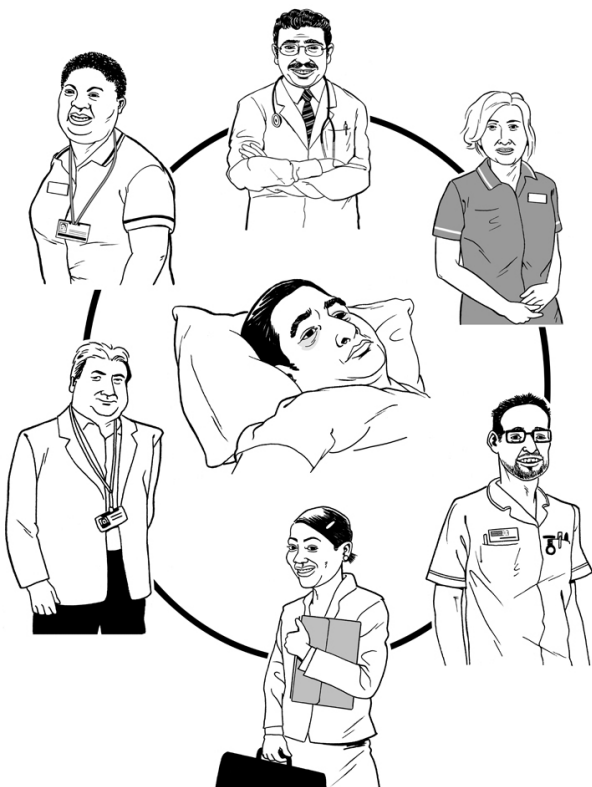


The surgeon (sounds like 'sir-john') – is the doctor who will do the operation and fix anything that isn't working properly.

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The nurse – at the hospital there will always be nurses around to help you and the doctors. If you have any worries and you don't want to talk to the doctor, you can talk to a nurse instead.



Anaesthesia team – the anaesthetist and other staff at the hospital who will look after you before, during and after the operation.

Your carer can come with you to the hospital.

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Getting ready for an operation

If you are fit and in good health before the operation, you will recover faster and with fewer problems.



If you smoke or drink, you should stop or try to cut back before the operation. Your GP can tell you where to get help with this.

If you are overweight, you should try to lose some weight and eat healthy foods.

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Walking and using the stairs are good exercises to help you get fit for an operation.



Talk to your GP about any medical problems you have, such as diabetes or asthma, before you go to the hospital for the operation. Your doctor will make sure you are taking the right medicines.



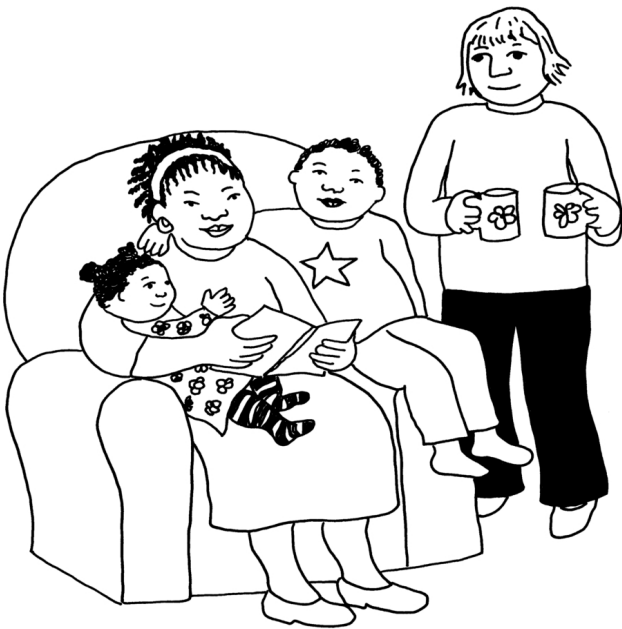
If you have loose teeth, visit your dentist to fix them before the operation. Loose teeth can come out during an operation.

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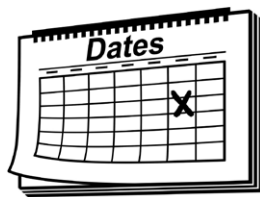


It may be difficult to move around and go out as normal after the operation.

Arrange with your family, friends or carer to have enough food and plenty of your usual medicines for when you come home from the hospital.



It is normal to feel very tired after an operation. Ask your carers and family to be around and help you when you are back home.



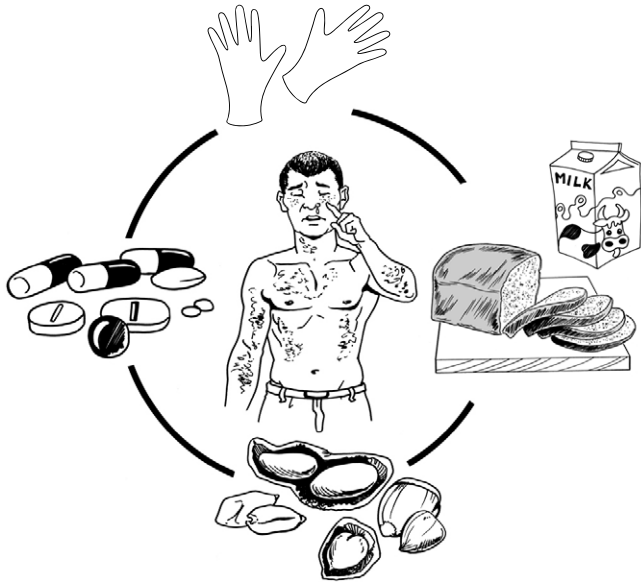
Before the operation at the hospital

You will be given a date and time to meet a nurse or an anaesthetist at the hospital's pre-assessment clinic to discuss the operation.

Your carer can go with you.

The doctor or nurse will ask you lots of questions about your health and medicines you take. **Bring all your usual medicines in their boxes (or a list of them) with you to the appointment.**

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Tell them about any allergies you have.



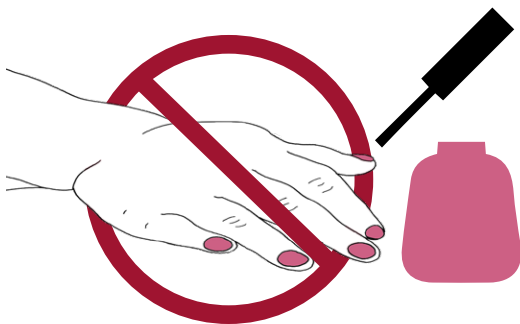
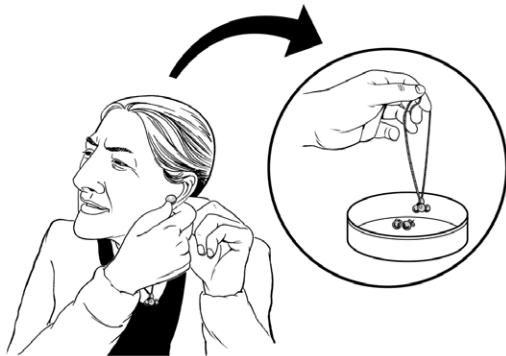
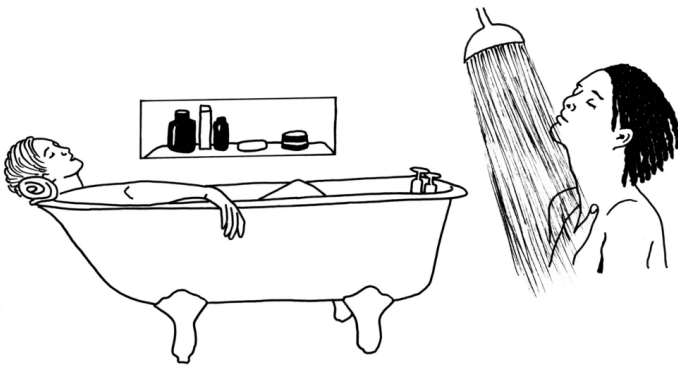
They may also arrange for you to have some tests before the operation to make sure it can go ahead safely.



It is normal to feel worried before an operation. You and your carer can ask the team any questions you have about the operation or anaesthetic. They can explain things and offer you help.



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On the day of the operation

Make sure you have a bath or shower before going to hospital. Clean skin is less likely to become infected.

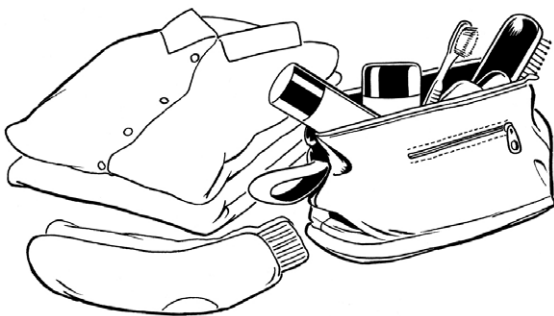
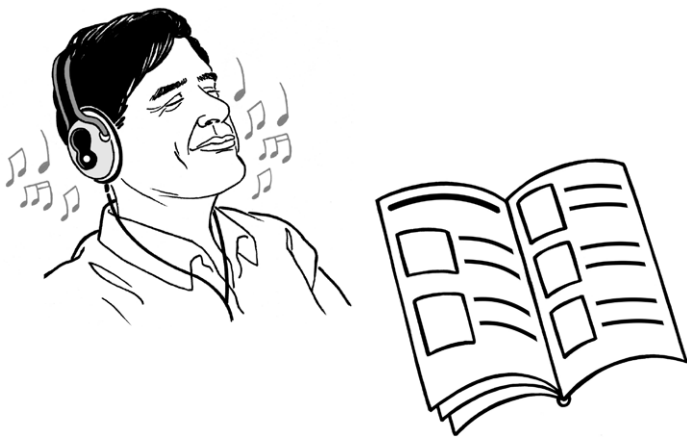
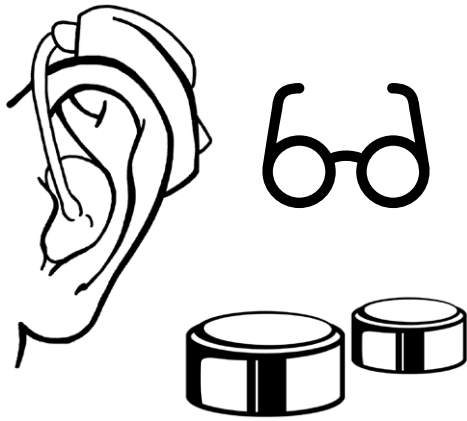
Do **not** wear any of these to the hospital:

✗ jewellery

✗ make up or creams

✗ nail varnish.

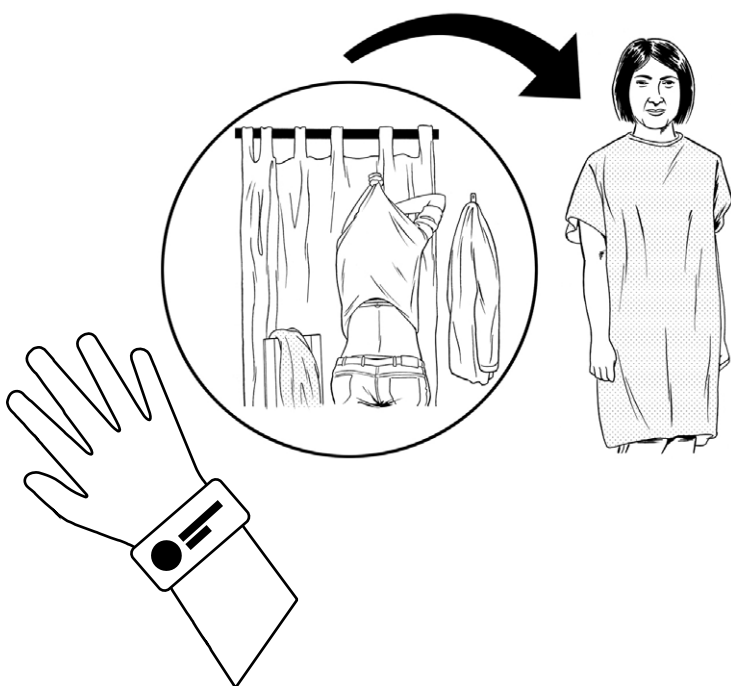
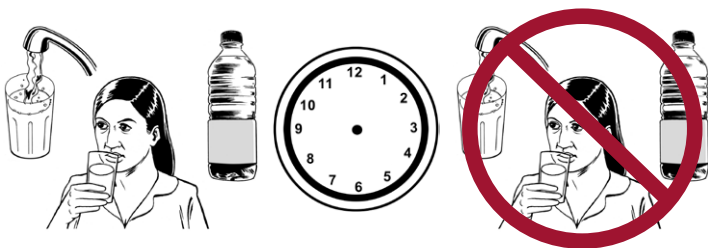
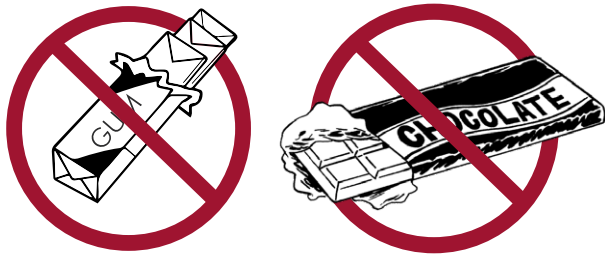
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Do take these with you to the hospital:

- ✓ your glasses, dentures, hearing aids with spare batteries
- ✓ your normal medicines. The team will tell you if you need to stop taking any
- ✓ something to do on the day of the operation, like music (with headphones so you don't disturb other patients), something to read or games to relax you
- ✓ something warm and comfortable to wear in case it's cold, and some basic toiletries.

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You will be given a time to stop eating.

That also means no sweets, chewing gum or milk. If there is food in your stomach during the operation, it could be dangerous.

You should continue to drink water until the time to stop so that you don't feel too thirsty when you wake up.

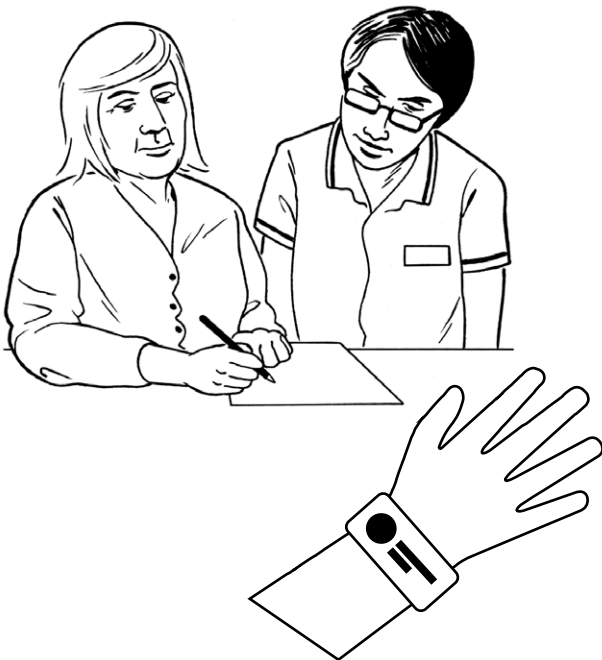
You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and wear a band on your wrist with your name on it.

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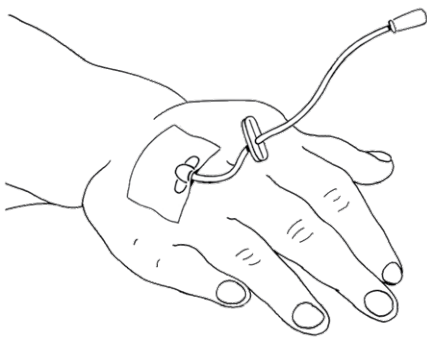


When it is time for your operation, a nurse will take you to the operating theatre.

Your carer or the nurse may be allowed to go with you.

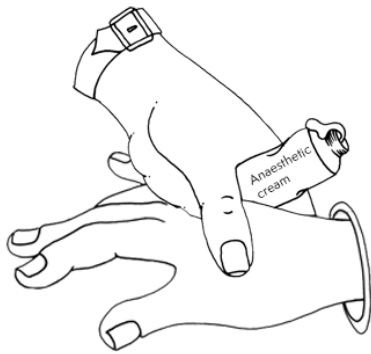


The team will make a few more checks and look at the details on your wristband. They will ask you some questions to make sure all is OK and you agree to have the operation.



The anaesthetist will usually put a small plastic tube (cannula) in the back of your hand to give you all the medicines and drugs you need during the operation.

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If you are worried that the cannula is going to hurt, your anaesthetist may be able to put a numbing cream on your hand before you go to theatre.



Sometimes you can breathe in a gas to make you sleep instead.



Once you are asleep, the anaesthetist will stay with you until you wake up.

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After the operation and going home

After the operation you will be taken to the recovery room for a short time. Here the nurses will make sure that you are OK when you wake up.

They will also give you medicine for any pain or sickness that you might feel.



Once they are happy that you are recovering well, they will take you to the ward.

On the ward you may start drinking and eating again. Here the staff will also start preparing you to leave hospital.



The staff will discuss with you and your carer what painkillers you will need to take at home.

They will tell you how many to take and how often.

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Make sure you and your carer know who to call in case of any problems. The staff will give you the number to call before you leave the hospital.

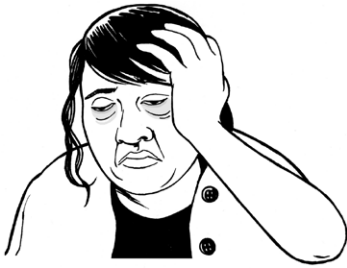


You should go home with your carer. They should be with you all the time for the first day and night after you are back home.



Take it easy for a few days after the operation. Follow carefully any instructions and exercises that the hospital gives you.

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If you feel very unwell or start having a fever, ask your carer to call the hospital or to take you back to the hospital.



Good luck with your operation!
Don't forget to ask the staff if you have any questions or if anything is not clear. They are there to help you.

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Tell us what you think


We welcome suggestions to improve this leaflet. If you have any comments that you would like to make, please email them to patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk

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 RoyalCollegeofAnaesthetists

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