

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 tells you what to expect and how to get ready for an operation.

We hope you find it helpful.

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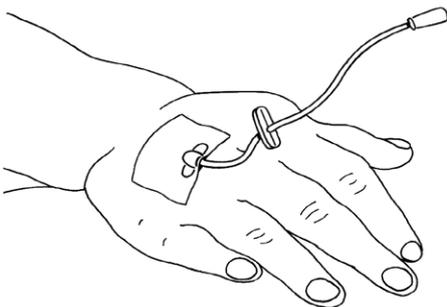
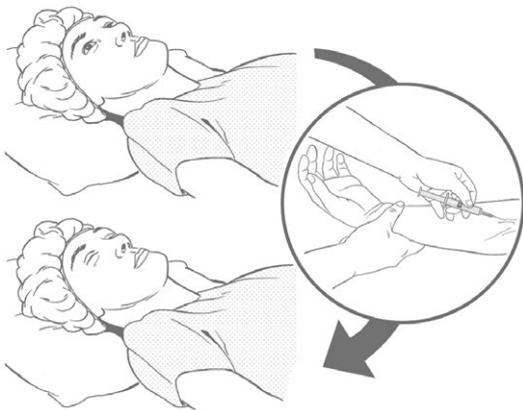
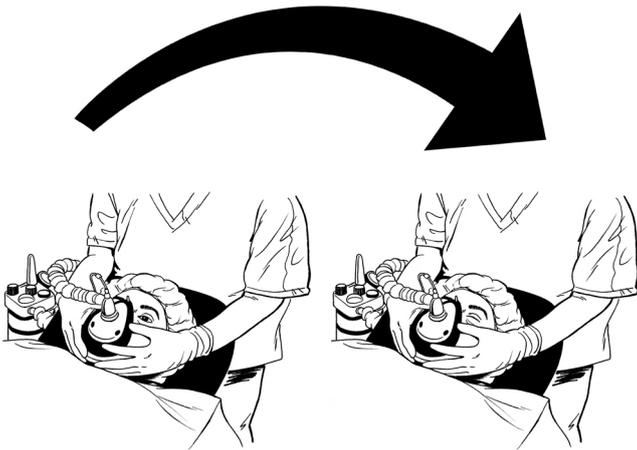
What the difficult words mean

Anaesthesia (sounds like 'An-ess-thee-zee-a') puts you to sleep for an operation.

General anaesthetics (sounds like 'An-ess-the-tics') medicines that send you to sleep so you are comfortable during the operation.

Pre-assessment clinic a clinic at the hospital where a nurse will ask you questions about your health. You may also meet an anaesthetist to discuss the plan for the anaesthetic.

Cannula (sounds like 'can-you-la') a thin plastic tube that a doctor or nurse will place in the back of your hand to give you medicines or fluids.





Who will look after you at the hospital

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



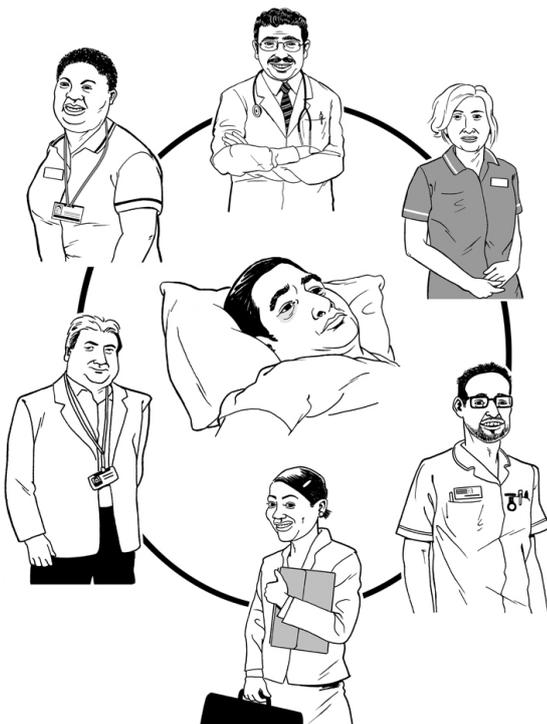
The anaesthetist (sounds like 'an-ees-th-tist') a doctor trained in giving medicines that make you sleep during the operation.



The surgeon (sounds like 'sir-john') is the doctor who will do the operation.



The nurse – at the hospital there will always be nurses around to help you and the doctors. If you have any worries you can talk to the doctor or a nurse.



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

Your carer and family can come with you to the hospital.



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, drink alcohol, or take illegal drugs, 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. Your doctor can suggest where you can get help.



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



Talk to your GP about any health 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.



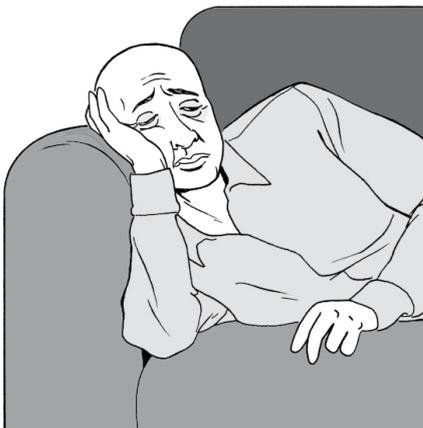
If you have loose teeth, visit your dentist to fix them before the operation. Loose teeth can come out during an operation.



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



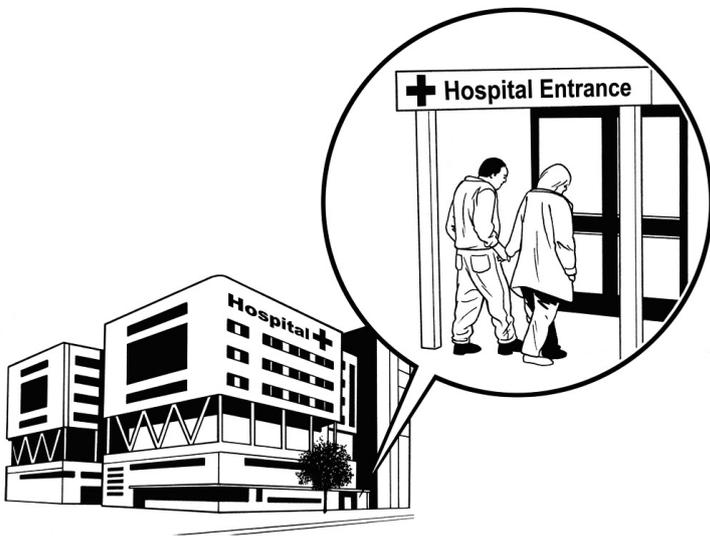
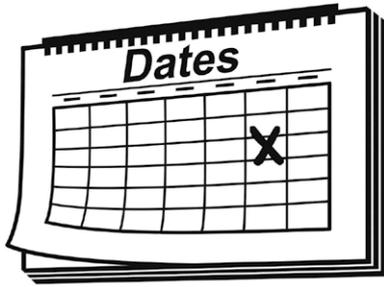
Ask your family, friends or carer to make sure you have enough food and plenty of your usual medicines for when you come home from the hospital.



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

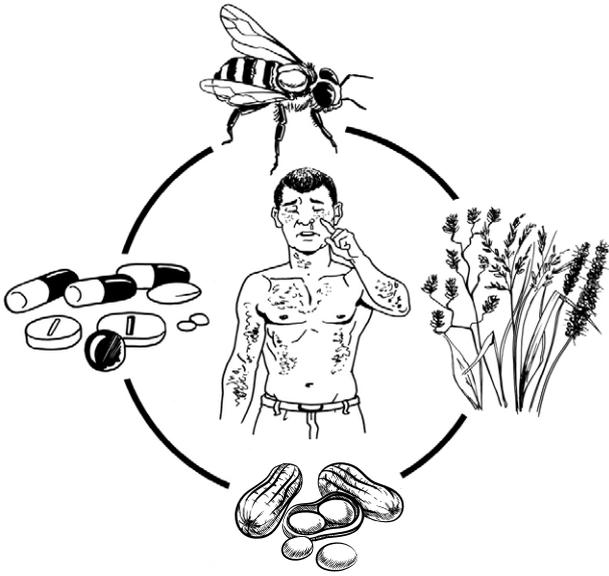
The hospital will send you a date and time to meet a nurse or an anaesthetist at the hospital's pre-assessment clinic to discuss the operation.



Your carer or a family member can go with you.



The doctor or nurse will ask you 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.**



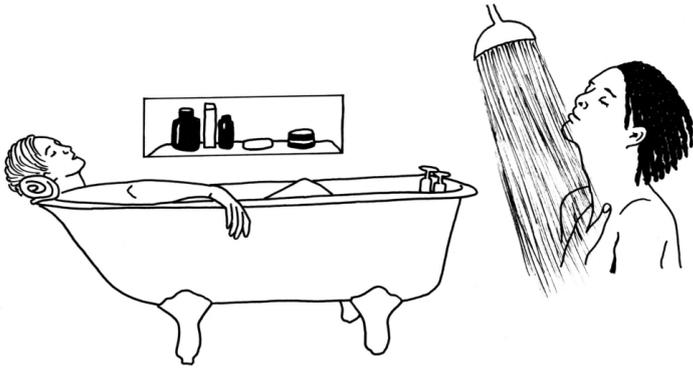
Tell them about any allergies you have.



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

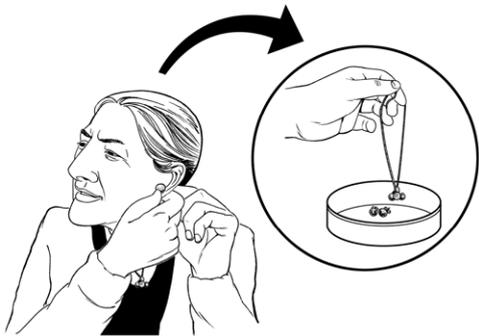


People often feel worried before an operation. You and your carer can ask the team any questions you have about the operation or anaesthetic. They can explain things and offer you help.



On the day of the operation

Have a bath or shower before going to hospital. Clean skin is less likely to become infected.



Do not wear or take any of these to the hospital:

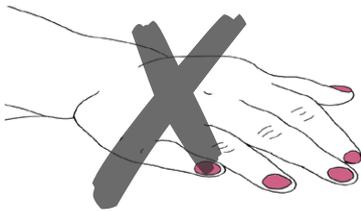
✗ jewellery

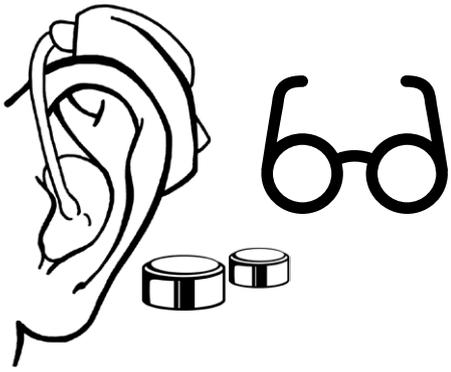
✗ make up or creams

✗ nail varnish

✗ other valuables

✗ large sums of money.



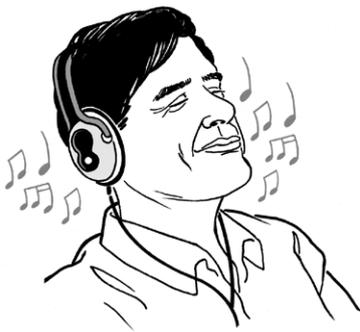


Do take these with you to the hospital:

✓ your glasses, dentures, hearing aids with spare batteries, a box for these will be useful



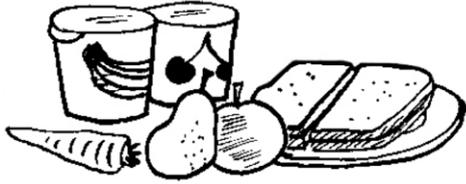
✓ your normal medicines. The team will tell you if you need to stop taking any



✓ 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 things to wash with.



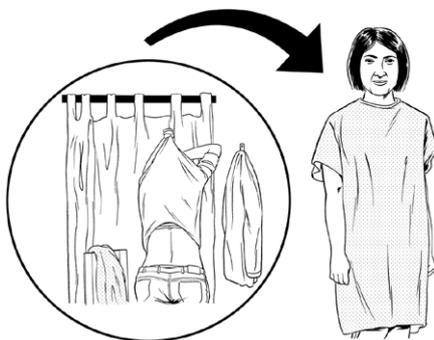
The hospital will tell you when you need to stop eating.



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 nurse tells you to stop, so that you don't feel too thirsty when you wake up.



The hospital will give you a hospital gown to change into and a band to wear on your wrist with your name on it.

~~~~~ Patient ID: S12345678 Name: Joanne James  
~~~~~ DOB: 11-01-1972 NHS No: 625 262 7258 ~~~~~



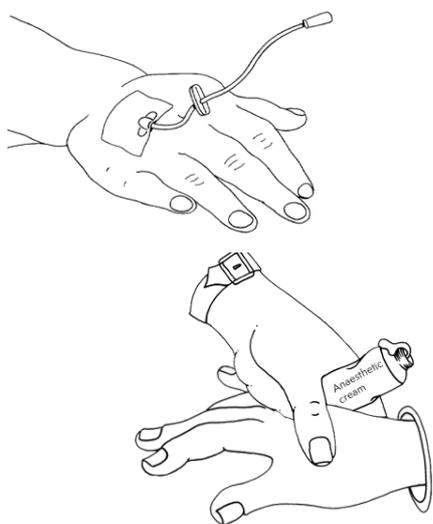


When it is time for your operation, a nurse will take you to the operating theatre. This is where the operation will take place.

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. You will be asked to sign a consent form.



The anaesthetist will usually put a small plastic tube (cannula) in the back of your hand to give you all the medicines you need during the operation. Sometimes your anaesthetist will use a cream to make this more comfortable.

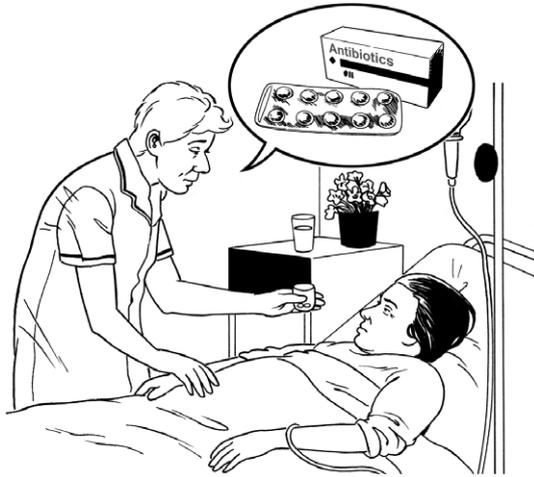


Sometimes you can breathe in a gas to make you go to sleep instead.



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

After the operation and going home



After the operation you will be taken to a room near the theatre until you are fully awake and OK. Nurses will be with you there.

They will also be able to give you medicines if needed to keep you comfortable.



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

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



The staff will talk to you and your carer about what painkillers you will need to take at home.

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



Make sure you and your carer know who to call in case of any problems when you get home. 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.



If you feel very unwell or start feeling hot and sweat, ask your carer to call the hospital or to take you back to the hospital.

If you have any concerns about your wound contact your GP or the hospital.

Follow any instructions you are given about when you will be able to start driving again.



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.

Tell us what you think

We welcome suggestions to improve this leaflet.

Please complete this short questionnaire:

www.rcoa.ac.uk/form/tell-us-easy-read.

Or by scanning the QR code with your mobile.



If you have any general comments, please email them to:

patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk.

Information for healthcare professionals on printing this leaflet

Please consider the visual impairments of patients when printing or photocopying this leaflet. Photocopies of photocopies are discouraged as these tend to be low quality prints and can be very difficult for patients to read. Please also make sure that you use the latest version of this leaflet, which is available on the RCoA website:

www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/easyread.

Royal College of Anaesthetists

Churchill House, 35 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4SG

020 7092 1500

rcoa.ac.uk



Third Edition, July 2025

This leaflet will be reviewed within five years of the date of publication.

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