

Preparing my child for their dental general anaesthetic (SEAL Unit)

A general anaesthetic ensures that your child is unconscious (asleep) and pain free during an operation. Anaesthetists are specialist doctors who give the anaesthetic and look after the health of your child during surgery and recovery.

Preparing your Child

It is important that your child knows:

- that they are going into hospital
- that they will be having an operation to get their poorly teeth removed
- some basic information about what will happen to them when they are in hospital

Please visit the Royal College of Anaesthetists website rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo for stories and videos to prepare your child for a general anaesthetic.

They also have easy read leaflets to help prepare children and young people with learning difficulties. rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/easyread

Before the General Anaesthetic

A nurse from the hospital will ring you to find out some details of your child's health and medication. They will advise you on appropriate pain relief to give your child before and after the appointment if needed such as paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen.

It is usually best that general anaesthetics are carried out when your child is not sick.

continued over...

If your child is unwell, please call the dental clinic for advice on **0151 514 6266**. For weekend appointments where you need advice on the day of treatment, please call **07552260753**.

It is sometimes better to delay the surgery until they are feeling better.

On the Day of the General Anaesthetic / Dental Extractions

Fasting

The hospital should give you clear instructions about when to stop your child eating and drinking. It is important for you and your child to follow these instructions or the operation may need to be cancelled. This is because if there is food or liquid in your child's stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come up into the back of the throat and damage his or her lungs.

Please follow these general rules:

Food, milk, baby formula, sweets and chewing gum - stop eating/drinking these 6 hours before you arrive at the hospital.

Breast milk - stop drinking this 4 hours before you arrive at the hospital

Sips of clear fluids (water, very diluted squash, clear sports drinks if they are not fizzy) - stop drinking these 1 hour before you arrive at the hospital.

Your child should take any regular medicines on the day of surgery as usual with a sip of water / dilute squash. Please don't fast your child any longer than the times given above - it is very hard for little ones if they are not eating and drinking for longer than needed.

What to bring to hospital

- your child's regular medication
- 1 adult per child – please do not bring any other children with you.
- things to keep your child occupied eg, books / toys / phone / tablet
- patients and parents should wear comfortable clothes that can be washed, as your child may dribble blood-stained saliva

When you arrive at the hospital

You and your child will go to the Surgical Elective Admissions Lounge (SEAL). The Team will ask you about your child health and whether they have had a cough or a cold recently, about any previous operations and if they have had or any medical problems. The nurses may measure and weigh your child and put a wristband on them.

The nurse may put a numbing cream on the back of your child's hand so that the anaesthetic is more comfortable.



In Theatre

One parent can go with your child to the room where they will go to sleep.

The anaesthetic medicine may be given while your child is lying on a bed, or for smaller children when they are sitting on your lap.

The anaesthetic medicine is usually given by an injection into the back of their hand through a thin plastic tube called a cannula. This should not be painful because of the cream that was applied earlier. Your child will go to sleep very quickly.

Sometimes we use anaesthetic 'gas' to put them to sleep. This is just as good as the injection but takes a bit longer to work - two or three minutes. It involves blowing a mixture of anaesthetic and oxygen across their mouth and nose through a mask and smells like felt tip pens. Your child should not find this unpleasant. You may notice he / she become a bit restless whilst going to sleep - this is normal. The doctor and nurses will tell you and your child everything that they are doing.

Once your child is asleep you will go back to the waiting area until their operation is over.

Once your child starts to wake up you will be brought to the Recovery Room to be with them. When they have fully woken up you will both go back to the SEAL Unit.

After the procedure

You and your child will stay on the SEAL Unit until they are well enough to go home. They may be upset or sleepy after their operation and there will be some blood in their mouth. This is completely normal.

The nurses will give you instructions on how to look after your child's mouth. When the nurses are happy you can take your child home by car or taxi (you cannot go home by bus or train as your child may feel sick and drowsy).

Further information

For more information about general anaesthetics, including information on any risks and side effects please go to rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo

If you have questions or concerns about the treatment planned, please contact the dental clinic as soon as possible to discuss. If the plan for your treatment changes, we may need to change the treatment appointment that you need.

continued over...



**Anaesthetic information for
children, parents and carers.**



My Daycase Operation booklet.



**For information on protecting
your child from dental decay.**



If you have any problems after treatment, please contact:

Opening hours:

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

St Catherine's Health Centre Dental Clinic

0151 514 6420

Victoria Central Health Centre Dental Clinic

0151 514 6266

Out of Hours:

Out of Hours Service 111

Revive Dental Care

0161 476 9651

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net

July 2025 V2



wchc.nhs.uk



[@nhsbuzz](https://www.facebook.com/nhsbuzz)



[@wchc_nhs](https://twitter.com/wchc_nhs)