
Department of Ophthalmology

Cataract surgery using general anaesthesia

Brief description

You have been advised to have your cataract surgery performed using general anaesthesia (GA). This booklet is designed to answer some of the main questions you might have regarding Cataract Surgery under GA at Addenbrooke's Hospital. This leaflet should be read together with the cataract surgery information leaflet.

Cataract surgery under GA is a day case procedure. Please arrange for a friend or relative to collect you later that day and stay with you overnight. On no account should you drive yourself home.

The cataract operation using General anaesthesia

General anaesthesia allows you to be in a state of controlled 'sleep' during your operation. You will be unaware of what is happening and will feel no pain.

A medical pre-assessment will be carried out at the time of your eye examination. You will be asked about your general health, any previous illnesses or operations, medications, allergies or adverse drug reactions, any problems with neck movement and mouth opening, and whether you have any caps or crowns on your teeth. Investigations such as blood tests and a heart trace may be arranged.

What are the risks of General anaesthesia?

Modern general anaesthesia is very safe. The risks associated with a GA depend on your overall health. Probably the most common problem is a sore throat. This can be helped by mouth gargles and simple analgesia, such as paracetamol. Any risk factors related to your personal health circumstances will be discussed with you at the pre-operative visit.

Although serious problems are very unlikely, you need to weigh up the risks when making a decision to consent for a cataract removal operation under GA.

On the day of surgery

Fasting: It is very important that you follow the instructions you are given regarding eating and drinking. You must not eat for **six** hours before the operation, you may drink water only for up to **three** hours before surgery. This allows your stomach to empty by the time you are ready for surgery. Fasting reduces your risk of vomiting during or after your anaesthetic. You may take some sips of water to swallow any medication tablets.

Minor illnesses: These can cause problems with GA. If you have a cough, cold or other illness please phone the ward before coming into hospital, because it might be better for you to recover from a minor illness before surgery.

Please bring your regular medication into hospital with you.

You will be admitted to hospital on the day of your surgery. Please let the admitting nurse and doctor know if there have been any medical issues or changes to your medication since your pre-assessment. The surgeon will examine your eye before your surgery and you will meet the anaesthetist. On the ward, your blood pressure and pulse rate will be measured. Eye drops to dilate the pupil will be used several times in the hour prior to your surgery.

On arrival at the Eye Unit

Please arrive at the **eye unit** at the time specified on your appointment letter. Because we are unable to give you a specific time for your surgery in advance, please be prepared to be with us for the whole morning or afternoon. Once you arrive, we will be able to give you a better idea of how long you will be with us.

If your relative, friend or carer wishes to stay with you while you wait for your operation, refreshments are available at the hospital concourse or in the outpatient hall coffee shop.

- The nurse will check your medical details, blood pressure and pulse when you arrive. He/she will put some drops into your eye to dilate the pupil.
- The surgeon who will be performing your surgery will meet you and examine your eyes. Please do feel that you can ask further questions at this stage.

The procedure

Just before your operation, you will be taken to the anaesthetic room where you will be connected to a monitor. A small plastic tube (cannula) will be placed in the back of your hand; the medicines that start the general anaesthetic are injected through this. Once you are asleep, a tube will be placed into your mouth/nose to control your breathing. The insertion of this breathing tube can be difficult if you have limited movement of your neck; sometimes we need to use a special telescope to help us. If we think this will be necessary, we will let you know at the preoperative visit. You will remain unconscious for the duration of your operation, and you will be continuously monitored throughout this time.

You will be given appropriate pain-relieving drugs and fluids through the cannula during your operation. At the end of your operation, the GA will be reversed. You will wake up in the operating theatre and then be taken to the recovery room.

After the operation

You will be closely monitored in the recovery room to ensure that your vital signs are stable and that you are not in pain.

You might have an oxygen mask on your face to help you breathe. You might also wake up feeling drowsy. You will have a cannula in one of the veins in your arm. This may be attached to a bag of fluid (called a drip), which feeds your body with fluid until you are well enough to eat and drink by yourself. Your eye will be covered with a plastic eye shield to protect it. This should remain in place until the following day.

While you are in the recovery room, a nurse will regularly check your pulse and blood pressure. When you are well enough to be moved, you will be taken back to the ward. Sometimes, people feel sick after an operation and might vomit. If you feel sick, please tell a nurse and you will be given medicine to stop the sickness/vomiting.

After the operation, you will be able to eat and drink as soon as you are wide-awake. As soon as you are sufficiently awake, you can get out of bed.

It is common for the vision to be blurred or discoloured initially after the operation. This will gradually clear. Blood stained tears are also common; you should dab your cheek, not your eye, with a clean disposable tissue.

If your surgeon is planning to examine your eye the following morning, you may be able to go home three to four hours after your operation. If appropriate for you, however, your surgical team may instead examine your eye before you go home rather than arranging review the next day.

On discharge from hospital, you will be given a discharge information sheet, eye drops and a cleaning pack.

Information and support

We hope you have found this information helpful. If you have any questions or anxieties, please feel free to speak to a member of our staff or contact the **Cataract Clinic on Tel: 01223 216711**. Further information can also be obtained from the following organisations and websites:

- Royal National Institute for the Blind
224 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5AA
Tel: 0845 766 99 99 www.rnib.org.uk/info/cataract.htm
- The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
17 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QW
Tel: 020 7935 0702 www.rcophth.ac.uk/genpublic.html



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

Bu bilgiyi diger dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya asagıdaki adrese e-posta gönderin: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

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Bengali

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

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