

Anesthesia and Your Child

Being anxious about a surgery or medical procedure is normal, especially when it involves your child. Rest assured that it is the top priority of your child's physician anesthesiologist and care team to ensure the safety and comfort of your child before, during and after their procedure. Understanding the anesthesia process and what to expect can help to calm your fears, so you can reduce your child's anxiety and help speed recovery.

Below you will find answers to common questions families ask when a child goes under anesthesia.

Who will provide anesthesia to your child?

A doctor called an anesthesiologist manages the care and treatment in providing pain relief before, during and after procedures or surgery. The pediatric anesthesiologists and all members of the anesthesia team at Texas Children's are specially trained to provide expert care to children of all ages.

Our anesthesiologists are board-certified and have completed subspecialty training in pediatric anesthesiology. Also many hold additional board certifications in pediatrics. Anesthesia for congenital heart surgery is provided by a team with subspecialty training in pediatric cardiac anesthesiology. Anesthesiologists are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to care for patients at Texas Children's.



What type of treatments does our Anesthesiology Department provide?

Texas Children's anesthesiologists generally provide the following services:

- Anesthesia and sedation for all types of pediatric surgery cases and procedures such as MRI, CT scan and GI endoscopy
- Evaluation of anesthesia needs for children with complex medical problems when surgery is needed
- Pain control with intravenous (IV) medications or other anesthetic techniques

What is the role of the anesthesiologist in the care of your child?

Members of our anesthesia care team are at your child's bedside throughout the procedure.

Before procedures, your anesthesiologist will meet with you to discuss what type of anesthesia will be used and how it will be given. They will also address any questions that you have concerning potential side effects and your child's experience during and after surgery.

During procedures, your anesthesiologist will provide medications to ensure your child's comfort and safety. Our anesthesia care teams monitor your child's vital signs beat by beat, watching for changes in heart rate, breathing and blood pressure, and adjust the anesthesia to keep your child comfortable.

After procedures, your child's team will closely monitor your child as they emerge from the anesthesia. Some children are fully alert while others are groggy for several hours. In addition, nausea and vomiting can occur as a side effect of the anesthesia. Your anesthesiologist and the PACU team work together to reduce any side effects and implement a pain control plan to make your child's recovery as comfortable as possible.



What are the risks of anesthesia?

“Will going under anesthesia hurt my child?” Every anesthesiologist and surgeon has been asked this question. Even though anesthesia is much safer today than ever before, every anesthesia exposure and surgery has an element of risk. In fact, it may be difficult to separate the risks of anesthesia from the risks of the surgery or medical procedure itself. Anesthesia is used to take away pain and discomfort from your child and makes it easier for a procedure to be accomplished in the best way possible. These benefits must be weighed against the risks of anesthesia itself.

The specific risks of anesthesia are like that of any medication. Each type of anesthetic has a specific set of risks and side effects associated with it. Your physician anesthesiologist will talk to you about the various types of anesthesia that may be used for your child and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Safety announcement from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a safety announcement in 2016, regarding the potential effect of anesthetics on children younger than 3 years of age.

- A single, short exposure to anesthesia appears to be safe
- There is some evidence that longer (>3 hours) or repeated exposures could have negative effects on behavior or learning
- Much more research is needed

Because anesthesia or sedation is necessary during most procedures to keep your child safe and comfortable, discuss the following items with your doctor before your procedure.

- Should the procedure be done now or when the child is older?
- How long is the procedure expected to take?
- Will repeated or additional procedures be needed?

Information on Anesthesia for Children

Texas Children's Hospital Department of Anesthesiology
texaschildrens.org/anesthesiology
832-824-5800

SmartTots
www.smarttots.org

Society for Pediatric Anesthesia
www.pedsanesthesia.org

FDA Statement on Pediatric Anesthesia
www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm532356.htm

