

General anaesthesia for children's dental treatment

Information for patients, parents and carers

This leaflet contains information about general anaesthesia for dental treatment. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of staff looking after your child.

Confirming your child's identity

Before your child has a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you to confirm their name and date of birth and check their ID band. If your child does not have an ID band, we will also ask you to confirm their address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Why does my child need a general anaesthetic?

Your child might need general anaesthetic because of the type of dental treatment they are having, or if they are not able to cope with the treatment when they are awake.

For some very anxious children, especially young children, and those who require more difficult procedures, a general anaesthetic may be the best option for your child.

What is a general anaesthetic?

General anaesthesia is a state of controlled unconsciousness which allows treatment to be carried out without pain or discomfort. This means that your child will be asleep during the treatment, and they will not feel any pain.

Who gives the anaesthetic?

General anaesthetics are given by anaesthetists. They are doctors with specialist training and are experts at looking after patients when they are asleep. The anaesthetist stays with your child during the operation and carefully monitors them.

Why does my child have to go to hospital to have a general anaesthetic?

Government regulations state that general anaesthetic for dental treatment may only be given in hospital where all the appropriate safety facilities are available. General anaesthetic cannot be given at your local dentist practice.

Will my child have any side effects?

Children may feel dizzy and sick for a few hours after the operation. They may complain of a headache or sore throat. Your child may feel agitated or upset on waking.

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with a senior member of staff again.

How safe is general anaesthesia for dental treatment and what are the risks?

With modern general anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Most children recover quickly.

Approximately, 1 in 10,000 children develop a serious allergic reaction to the anaesthetic. The risk of life-threatening complications for healthy children having minor or moderate non-emergency surgery is less than 1 in 100,000 (*RCOA (2020) Your child's general anaesthetic information leaflet*).

What should I expect on the day?

It is important that your child does not have anything to eat or drink before the operation. We will tell you when your child can last have something to eat or drink before you come to the hospital. It is important that you follow these instructions carefully.

Please note, the time your child has been given on their admission letter is their admission time and not their operation time.

Please make sure your child wears comfortable clothing on the day and bring a spare set of clothing, in case of soiling.

We have a friendly team of dentists, anaesthetists and nurses who will be looking after your child on the day of their treatment. They will be able to answer any questions you may have.

Please be aware, only one parent or carer will be able to stay with your child until they are asleep. You will not be allowed to enter the operating theatre. A nurse will get you as soon your child starts to wake up.

When should my child go back to school?

Your child will need to be off school on the day of the procedure and the following day.

What will happen after treatment?

Your child can go home from the hospital when they have recovered.

After surgery, your child will be given jelly and yoghurt on the ward. You are welcome to bring a snack box of items they enjoy. Consider softer foods, particularly following dental extractions.

Have pain relief at home, as the hospital does not provide it.

Unless the hospital team tell you otherwise, your child's dental care will be transferred to their local dentist when they leave hospital. It is very important that your child visits their local dentist for regular check-ups.

What if my child is unwell before the operation?

You should contact us if your child develops a cough or cold within two weeks of the operation, or diarrhoea or vomiting within a few days of the operation. It may be better to delay the operation until your child is better. Our contact details are below.

Is there anything I can do to help prepare my child?

Children sometimes worry when they find out that they need to go to sleep for dental treatment. Children who understand what is going to happen will feel calmer and more confident. The QR code and link below take you to a child friendly video, which follows a child called Scott during their dental treatment under general anaesthetic. Please watch this video with your child to help prepare them.

[SCOTT Game \(HTML5\) \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#)



[Your child's general anaesthetic information leaflet, RCOA \(2023\)](#)



Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this leaflet, please contact the Department of Paediatric Dentistry team. If your child has persistent bleeding, severe swelling or severe pain, please contact us. If out of hours or at weekends, please call NHS 111 or attend your local A&E department for advice.

Central Referral Office	020 3299 4988
Clinic Appointments	020 3299 3055
Secretary	020 3299 1681
Dental admissions	020 3299 3783

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.kch.nhs.uk/patientsvisitors/patients/leaflets

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your dentist if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net