

What is patient-controlled pain relief?

After some types of surgery, the anaesthetist will put you in control of your own pain relief in the following ways:

- You will get a button to press.
- Every time you press this button, you release a small amount of pain relief medication into your veins.
- You should press the pain relief button as often as you feel you need to.

You cannot give yourself an overdose because the amount of medication released is always controlled.

Paravertebral block for breast surgery

What is paravertebral block?

This is an injection in your upper back that will numb the chest wall, reducing your pain after breast surgery. You can receive this form of pain relief for up to three days if needed.

What are the advantages of paravertebral block?

Paravertebral block has the following advantages:

- High quality pain relief, which can reduce your body's reaction to the stress of surgery and will help your overall recovery.
- A reduced need for other strong painkillers.
- A lower risk of being sick or feeling sick after surgery.

What are the disadvantages of paravertebral block?

If the paravertebral block is not working well for you, your anaesthetist will change your treatment and give you pain relief through a drip, by injection or by tablet, depending on your needs.

In only a small number of cases, a paravertebral block may not work as planned.

- In some patients, one of their eyelids may begin to droop slightly and/or they may become pale – this usually settles when the paravertebral pain relief is working.
- Very rarely, in about one in 300 cases, it can cause a small amount of lung collapse – this usually improves quickly and you will not need to stay in hospital for any longer than you would normally have to.

After your surgery

Will I get or feel sick after my surgery?

Some patients may feel sick or get sick after their surgery, although the anaesthetic will rarely cause this.

About 35% to 40% of patients feel or get sick after breast surgery. Your anaesthetist will give you something to prevent you from feeling sick. If you are still getting sick or feeling sick when you return to the ward, you should tell the nurse. The nurse will give you the medication prescribed by your anaesthetist to relieve any sickness.

When can I eat and drink again?

You can eat or drink soon after your surgery if you want to.

Your throat may feel slightly dry or sore for the first few hours after your surgery. This is normal and may be due to the airway that was used during the anaesthetic.

More information

Please contact your breast care nurse at:



BreastCheck is a Government-funded programme and part of the National Screening Service.



Going for breast surgery and general anaesthetic

Introduction

Going for surgery can be a worrying time. Often you do not know what to expect or may feel anxious about the idea of going to hospital. You may not be familiar with many of the medical terms used or may want to know more about what the surgery involves.

Knowing what to expect can be helpful in preparing you for surgery and reducing your concerns. This leaflet outlines some of the aspects of breast surgery – for example, explaining what a general anaesthetic is and what to expect before and after your surgery. If you need further information or are unclear about any of the details in this leaflet, your breast care nurse or anaesthetist can answer any questions you may have.

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is a drug that makes you go to sleep in a safe and controlled way so that you do not feel anything during your surgery.

Usually, you will receive a small injection. A specially trained doctor will check on you during the surgery to make sure that your blood pressure and heart rate, among other things, are stable. You will only wake up after the surgery is over.

What does an anaesthetist do?

An anaesthetist is a special doctor, just like your surgeon or cancer specialist. The anaesthetist is in charge of giving you the anaesthetic and makes it possible for the surgeon to carry out your surgery safely.

Your anaesthetist will be with you during your surgery, especially after you have gone to sleep under general anaesthetic.

Your anaesthetist will work closely with your surgeon and take into account any ongoing health problems or medication and your current state of health.

The anaesthetist may give you medication to take before and after your surgery, including something to make you more relaxed if you need it.

Usually, your anaesthetist will meet you on the day of your surgery. You may also need to go to an Anaesthetic Assessment Clinic beforehand.

How should I prepare for the anaesthetic?

You will need to fast before your anaesthetic. Please read the following information carefully:

- You must **not** eat any solid food for at least **six hours** before you get a general anaesthetic. For example if you are going for morning surgery, you should not eat any solid food after 2.30 a.m.

- You may drink plain water up to two hours before the surgery – for example, up to 6.30 a.m. if you are going for morning surgery.
- You **must** follow the advice on fluids and only drink plain water.
- If you take medication regularly, please continue to take it on the day of your surgery, unless your doctor asks you not to do so.

What does an anaesthetic involve?

The anaesthetic will involve a number of steps, as follows:

- A nurse will first check your name and details with you.
- You will then be brought to a special room where you will receive the anaesthetic.
- Usually, your anaesthetist will give you a small injection in your arm to give you medication and fluids.
- You may be asked to breathe extra oxygen from a clear mask as your anaesthetist starts the general anaesthetic.
- You will then be brought to the operating theatre to have your surgery.
- The anaesthetist will carefully monitor your blood pressure and heart rate, among other things, throughout your surgery. The anaesthetist is highly trained to deal with any problems, in the unlikely event that one arises.

What happens when I wake up?

You will only wake up after your surgery is over.

- You will wake up in the recovery room, which is beside the operating theatre.
- You may hear your anaesthetist and/or nurse speaking to you.
- The nurse will watch you closely for a while and treat any pain, sickness or other problems that you may have.

If you have any further questions about the anaesthetic, please ask your anaesthetist or nurse.

Pain relief

Will I get pain relief after surgery?

If you feel pain after your surgery, your nurse or anaesthetist will help to relieve it. This will improve your recovery. Your anaesthetist and the nurse in the recovery room will make sure that you are comfortable before you go back to the ward.

How much pain you feel depends on the type of surgery you had. Some people will need more pain relief than others.