

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesiology is the practice of medicine in which special drugs are used to cause your entire body — or part of your body — to be insensitive to pain. Anesthesia will enable you to tolerate a surgical or invasive medical procedure comfortably. Today's anesthesia practices allow a greater degree of safety and comfort than ever before, enabling a smooth start to your healing and recuperation.

Who provides anesthesia?

Anesthesia care at Swedish Medical Center is provided by specialty-trained and board-certified physician anesthesiologists. They are trained to provide all types of anesthesia and in the delivery of intensive-care medicine. They are highly trained to anticipate and treat side effects of anesthesia and co-existing medical conditions. Some of our anesthesiologists have special interests and training in cardiac, pediatric, obstetric or neurosurgical anesthesia, and in the treatment of chronic pain.

What are the types of anesthesia?

Anesthetics are medicines that temporarily interrupt the transmission of painful nerve impulses to the spinal cord and brain.

General anesthetics work by producing a state of unconsciousness and inhibit the

brain's perception of sensations. *Local* anesthetics block painful impulses at the nerves that carry pain to the spinal cord and brain. *Sedatives* are medicines given by mouth or intravenously that induce a quiet and calm state and may be accompanied by short-term absence of memory. *Narcotics* are medicines given by vein and by mouth that decrease pain.

Depending on the nature of your operation and medical condition, your anesthesiologist — *in consultation with you* — will choose one, or a combination, of these anesthetic techniques to optimize your care.

Complications of anesthesia

As with any type of medical care, there are risks associated with surgery and anesthesia. Fortunately, our current technologies enable us to greatly minimize the complications. The potential complications vary with the different anesthesia techniques; therefore, your anesthesiologist will discuss the risks, benefits and alternatives to the different anesthetic options with you as they pertain to you and your operation.

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Preparation for anesthesia: pre-admission

To help avoid complications from your surgery and anesthesia, it is vital that you inform our Pre-Admission Center nurse of all medicines you take (including recreational drugs) and all your medical problems. Please read and follow all instructions in this packet pertaining to diet restrictions before surgery and prescription medicines on the morning of your surgery.

If you smoke, you are at greater risk for complications during and after surgery. We encourage you to quit smoking at least four to six weeks prior to your operation. You will not be able to smoke while you are hospitalized.

If, after your interview, you have specific concerns about your medical condition and anesthesia, our Pre-Admission Center can refer your questions to our anesthesia consultant.

Consulting with your anesthesiologist

On the day of your surgery, you will meet your anesthesiologist, who will review your medical record, clarify any questions about your medical history and perform a physical evaluation. You will then have an opportunity

to express your preferences, discuss the plan for your care, and have questions answered about the advantages, disadvantages, and possible risks of your anesthetic.

You will then be asked to sign an anesthesia specific consent form acknowledging your discussion with the anesthesiologist and your understanding and acceptance of the agreed upon anesthetic management of your procedure.

Please inform us if you have cultural, religious or personal reservations against receiving a blood transfusion. We will attempt to provide an anesthesiologist who can honor this request.

In the recovery room, you will be cared for by specially trained nurses. If you experience pain or nausea, tell your nurse immediately. He or she will be able to treat these conditions effectively. Also, follow your nurse's instructions for deep breathing and coughing.

Until we see you

Relax! We look forward to meeting you and caring for you safely and professionally.