



This document will give you information about a general anaesthetic. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### **What is a general anaesthetic?**

A general anaesthetic is a combination of drugs that causes deep sleep. It is used for operations or procedures as it causes a loss of sensation. Your child will not be aware of what is happening and afterwards will not remember anything that has happened.

### **How is a general anaesthetic given?**

Most older children are sent to sleep by injecting the anaesthetic through a drip (small tube) in a vein. The injection takes about 30 seconds to work. Some children prefer to go to sleep by breathing an anaesthetic gas through a face mask. This technique is more common in younger children and babies.

### **Are there any alternatives to a general anaesthetic?**

For certain procedures, such as a scan, your child may be able to have sedation. For smaller operations, your anaesthetist may consider a local anaesthetic injected near the area of surgery. The options depend on how mature your child is and their ability to stay calm and still.

### **What complications can happen?**

#### **1 Minor complications**

- Feeling or being sick
- Sore throat
- Behavioural changes
- Dental damage

#### **2 Serious complications**

- Nerve injury
- Slow or irregular heartbeat
- Cardiac arrest (where the heart stops working)
- Breathing problems
- Allergic reaction

### **How will my anaesthetist know that my child is really asleep?**

Your anaesthetist continuously monitors the amount of anaesthetic in your child's body to reduce the risk of your child being aware of what is happening.

### **Summary**

A general anaesthetic is usually a safe and effective way for your child to have an operation or procedure. Most children do not have any problems.

### **Acknowledgements**

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**This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.**