GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ANESTHESIA

What is anesthesia? Why do I need anesthesia?

Most people understand that they cannot have surgery in their current "awake" state. Anesthesia is the cumulative asleep state that a patient will be placed under to be able to safely undergo a surgical procedure.

What are the different types of anesthesia?

General anesthesia

This is the type of anesthesia people often think of when they consider having surgery. People often think of this as being "put to sleep." However, this is not entirely true. General anesthesia is a state of carefully controlled unconsciousness that is accomplished by a skilled anesthesia provider by giving different medications through an intravenous line and/or the use of anesthesia gases.

Regional Anesthesia ("block")

 In this type of anesthesia, a local anesthetic (numbing medicine similar to what a dentist might use) is injected near large bundles of nerves so that larger parts of the body (like the shoulder, arms, hand, knee or foot) will lose the ability to perceive pain. That specific part of the body will lose sensation for the duration of the block, which is typically 6-18 hours.

 Another form of Regional Anesthesia is an *epidural* or *spinal anesthetic*. In either case, a small amount of local anesthetic will be deposited in the back of the patient near the nerves that innervate the lower extremities and/or abdomen. This is the form of anesthesia often used for knee replacement surgery.

 Not all patients will be candidates for Regional Anesthesia. Your anesthesia provider will discuss this option with you if you are safely eligible for this type of anesthetic.

Sedation ("twilight sleep")

 In this type of anesthesia, the Anesthesia provider will administer drugs that will make you feel relaxed and drowsy. During this drowsy state, most patients will experience minimal, if any, recall of the events during their procedure.

The type of anesthesia that you will receive will be decided by your Anesthesia provider *after* consideration of your physical condition, age, current medications, and the nature and duration of the surgery.

What does my Anesthesia provider do during my surgery?

While you are having surgery, your Anesthesia provider we will monitor basic life functions like your heart rate, rhythm and function, your blood pressure and your oxygenation. Depending on the complexity of your surgical case, other monitors may also be used.

What to expect after my surgery?

After your surgery is finished based on the type of anesthesia you receive, you may be taken to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) where highly trained nurses will monitor your recovery from anesthesia and surgery for a given period of time. You will then either be admitted to a floor, if decided by you and your surgeon, or sent back to the same area where you initially began your perioperative journey to complete your recovery and be discharged home.

Will I have pain after my surgery?

As your anesthesia providers, we have your well-being, safety and comfort as our most important priorities! While it is almost impossible to have absolutely no pain at all after a surgery, we are trained and skilled to ensure that you remain comfortable before, during and after your surgery. The specifics of your procedure and your overall health will determine how we achieve that goal. All of this, of course, will be discussed with you on the day of your surgery.

What if it is my child that is having a surgery?

The safety and comfort of all patients is our goal regardless of their age! We do, of course, tailor our approach and our anesthesia care to you and in this case your child's needs. Based on specific circumstances, we are able to help your child feel more relaxed and calm before they go into the operating room. Your anesthesia care team will be able to explain and discuss with you any nuances of your child's care as it relates to anesthesia service on the day of your child's surgery. The safety and comfort of your child are our utmost concerns and we will tailor their anesthesia needs on an individual basis.