

# ANAESTHESIA

Comfort | Safety | Quality

## What is anaesthesia?

**General anaesthesia** occurs when your anaesthetist puts you into a state of carefully controlled unconsciousness for the duration of an operation or procedure. You are “unaware” and feel no pain.

**Regional anaesthesia** occurs when your anaesthetist injects local anaesthetic drugs around nerves to numb the part of your body where the surgeon operates. This is sometimes called a “nerve block”.

**Local anaesthesia with sedation** occurs when your anaesthetist puts you into a state of carefully controlled drowsiness whilst local anaesthetic is injected under your skin to numb the part of your skin to be operated on.

## What is an anaesthetist?

An anaesthetist is a specialist medical doctor. Australian anaesthetists are among the world’s most highly trained doctors. They have undergone a minimum of 13 years of training that starts with a medical degree and finishes with a 5 year specialist training program in anaesthesia.

## My role in your operation

My name is Dr Stephen Lightfoot and I will be your anaesthetist for your operation. I will provide you with anaesthetic care of the highest quality and safety.

## What will happen on the day of my operation?

Before your operation I will have a discussion with you about your general health and previous experience with anaesthetics. I am assessing your level of health & fitness and making decisions about the most appropriate form of anaesthesia for you.

I will then insert a cannula into one of your veins and take you into the operating theatre. I will give you anaesthetic drugs through the cannula to put you into a state of unconsciousness.

## What happens during my operation?

While you are unconscious I stay by your side, constantly monitoring your bodily functions (eg heart rhythm, levels of oxygen in your blood and blood pressure) and I make adjustments to the anaesthesia to ensure your body continues to function normally.

During your operation I will give you medication to control any pain or nausea you may experience when you wake from the anaesthetic.





## What do I do with my medications when I'm fasting?

Before your surgery you will need to "fast" which means that you must stop food and liquid intake for a period of time beforehand so your stomach is empty. Your stomach needs to be empty for your safety during your anaesthetic.

Even when fasting, in most cases, you should take your usual medications with enough water to enable you to swallow them.

Important exceptions to this rule are if you are taking **blood thinners or diabetic medications**.

In the case of **blood thinners** you should talk to your surgeon and your cardiologist/neurologist for instructions on what to do with these medications.

**Diabetic medications** should not be taken whilst fasting and you need to discuss what to do with them with your endocrinologist and with me. Please contact me at Prime Anaesthetics to discuss what to do with these medications.



## What will happen after my operation?

Usually you will wake quickly after the surgery is finished. Any pain or nausea you feel will be treated in the Recovery Room. There may be some dizziness, drowsiness and short-term memory loss during your recovery from the anaesthetic.

You are not allowed to drive a car, operate dangerous equipment or tools, sign any documents or drink alcohol for 24 hours after an anaesthetic. You should not make important decisions during this time.

## What are the risks of having an anaesthetic?

It is important to note that Australia is the safest place in the world to have an anaesthetic. Having said that, there are problems that can occur during or after an anaesthetic. There are common problems such as nausea, sore throat and headache that may be experienced after your anaesthetic. Then there are more serious problems such as severe allergic reactions and other emergencies that can occur during your anaesthetic. It is important to remember that most of the time these rare but serious complications do not occur.

## What will it cost?

I am an independent specialist medical practitioner and you will receive an invoice from me. My fee varies depending on the duration and complexity of your procedure, and on your general health. Unfortunately your health fund rebate does not cover the true cost of anaesthesia services. You will be responsible for paying the difference between my fee and the health fund rebates. This is known as the "gap" payment and it can range from \$250 to over \$600 for longer or more complex procedures.

It is essential that you call my rooms (Prime Anaesthetics) for a fee estimate before you present to hospital for your procedure.

## Questions

If you have any questions regarding your anaesthetic or if you wish to inform me about any medical problems you have, please contact me through Prime Anaesthetics as soon as you are booked for your surgery.



Prime Anaesthetics

Level 4, Suite 9, St George Private Hospital

Ph: 9553 1566