Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

Your dental treatment under general anaesthetic with the Special Care Dental Team

Information for patients and carers

This leaflet is designed to give you information about your dental procedure under general anaesthetic (GA) with the Special Care Dental team.

Please note that an 'Easy-Read' version of this leaflet is available, please contact the team if you would like a copy.

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is where medications (gases and injections) are given to make you temporarily unconscious (asleep) and give you freedom from pain, so you do not feel anything during your surgery.

An anaesthetist (a specially trained doctor) will stay with you during the procedure and carefully monitor you.

Dental procedures carried out under general anaesthetic

Dental procedures aim to restore good oral health by treating any infection, tooth decay and gum disease. This helps to improve the function of your mouth and keep you free from pain.

Your dentist will have discussed with you what treatment you are likely to have.
Treatments that may be carried out can include:

- Dental examination
- Scale and polish
- Dental X-rays
- Fissure sealants
- Tooth fillings
- Tooth extractions
- Fluoride varnish application
- Anti-bacterial gel application
- Fitting of dentures

What should I do before my surgery?

Please follow these important instructions before your surgery, or it may not be safe to carry out your procedure.

If you have a cold sore, develop a cold or feel unwell on the day before or day of your surgery, please contact the hospital for advice before attending your appointment:

RUH Day Surgery Unit 01225 824411 Monday – Friday 8.00am – 5.00 pm

- If you have a morning appointment you should not have any food / chewing gum/ drinks after midnight (except for water). You can sip plain water only up to 6am
- If you have an afternoon appointment your last food and drink must be before 6.00am. You can sip plain water only up to 11.00am
- A responsible, mobile adult must come with you to your appointment. They will need to be able to escort you home and stay with you until the day after your procedure
- Take your usual medication on the day of the surgery with a small sip of plain water, unless you have been told otherwise. Bring all your usual medication to the appointment
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and shoes to your appointment
- Remove all make-up, nail varnish and piercings that can be removed before your appointment, so that we can monitor you during your procedure
- Leave any valuables at home for safe keeping

What will happen when I arrive at the hospital?

Your letter from the hospital will tell you which hospital ward to report to and what time to be there. You will meet:

- A nurse who will make sure you are ready for the surgery
- The anaesthetist who will discuss the anaesthetic procedure and how you will be given the anaesthetic
- The dentists who will confirm the dental treatment plan
- You may be given a sedative medication to relax you before the procedure
- This will have been discussed with you at the dental assessment appointment

The anaesthetic

You will be taken to the operating room and asked to lie on the hospital bed when it is time for your surgery. Your responsible adult can come with you.
You will be given the anaesthetic by either:

- Anaesthetic gases through a facemask
- An injection through a cannula (a thin plastic tube placed using a needle). Anaesthetic cream may be used to numb the skin before the cannula is inserted
- You will quickly go off to sleep and your responsible adult can return to the waiting room
- The team of doctors, dentists and nurses will remain with you and monitor you throughout your procedure

What will happen after the procedure?

- When your treatment is complete you will be taken to the recovery room. This is where you will wake up
- A trained recovery nurse will look after you and if you wish they will bring your responsible adult in to see you
- You may have an oxygen mask on your face to help to clear the anaesthetic gases from your body
- You will have your blood pressure and pulse checked regularly in the recovery room
- If you have had teeth removed, you may have fabric dressings in the mouth. There may also be some blood present, and your mouth may be numb
- If you are feeling discomfort, it is important to tell the nurse so they can give you pain relieving medication
- The dental team will come and see you and your responsible adult to explain the dental treatment that you had
- They will give you instructions on how to look after your mouth
- We are unable to give you an exact time when you will be discharged to go home as treatment and recovery times vary for each person. Please expect to be there for at least half a day
- You will be able to leave the hospital when the nurse is happy that you are well enough to go home
- You must have a responsible, mobile person to take you home and look after you

Care instructions for after your general anaesthetic

- The anaesthetic may make you feel confused, unsteady and prevent you thinking clearly
- This may last for up to 24 hours. During this time the person caring for you will need to give you one-to-one attention
- You should rest to help you recover safely. If you are unsteady, ask your carer to walk with you and avoid stairs if possible
- You should take your usual medicines unless you are told not to by your doctor
- It is very important you follow the advice below for your safety

What not to do during the first 24 hours

- Do not be responsible for children or other people
- Do not drive a vehicle or ride a bicycle
- Do not cook or use any machinery
- Do not make any important decisions
- Do not post anything on social media
- Do not drink alcohol or smoke

Common side effects after a general anaesthetic

- Sickness
- Shivering
- Sore throat
- Thirst
- Temporary memory loss
- Pain at the cannula site
- Minor lip / tongue injury

Care instructions for after your dental treatment tooth extractions

Numbing injections are used around any teeth removed to help with pain relief. This will be effective for one to three hours. Be careful not to accidentally bite your cheeks, tongue, or lips.

Avoid very hot food and drinks so you don't accidentally burn yourself.

Stitches may be placed around the sockets to stop the bleeding. These should dissolve within two to three weeks.

Dressings may be placed into the sockets to help stop the bleeding. These will either dissolve in three to four days or naturally fall out. If they fall out, they do not usually need replacing.

Common side effects

- **Pain:** See details on 'How do I manage my pain after a tooth extraction?' below
- **Swelling:** Can worsen the day after the procedure before resolving
- **Bruising:** in the mouth, or of the face
- **Bleeding:** we make sure bleeding stops at the end of the procedure. A small amount of blood tinted saliva afterwards is normal

Uncommon complications

Infection or a dry socket: You are at more risk if you are a smoker.
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/

- Pain or swelling which is not resolving with pain relief
- Jaw stiffness or limited mouth opening: If there is no improvement after a few weeks, please contact the dental team
- Retained root: sometimes it may not be possible to remove the whole tooth, or it could be safer to leave the root in place. Your dentist will inform you of this after the procedure
- Nerve damage: loss of sensation to the lips/tongue or chin. Usually associated with lower wisdom teeth removal. Damage is usually temporary but can take up to 18 months to recover. Contact your dentist if you think this has occurred

- Sinus problems: when removing an upper back tooth an opening can occur between your sinus and your mouth. This opening usually closes but you may need surgery
- Your dentist will tell you after your procedure if they think this has occurred

Answers to questions you may have after you have had a tooth extraction.
What should I not do in the first 24 hours following a tooth extraction?

Do not have anything hot to eat or drink

- Do not rinse or spit out
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol
- Do not do any strenuous activity
- Do not poke the area
- Avoid eating on the affected side
- Avoid grainy foods, try to eat only soft foods

How do I manage my pain after a tooth extraction?

- During the procedure pain relief is given (numbing injection). This will usually be effective for the first one to three hours
- After one to three hours, regular over the counter pain relief medicine may be required for the first few days. Always read the packet instructions before
- Paracetamol or Ibuprofen can be taken at the recommended dosages, if you are normally able to take these medicines
- **Avoid Aspirin** as it may increase bleeding

How do I manage bleeding after my tooth extraction?

- If this happens, take a clean handkerchief / flannel / gauze pack, roll it up, dampen with water under the cold tap. Place it over the socket and bite down firmly or apply pressure for 20 minutes
- Continued bleeding after pressure is very unlikely, but if this occurs, please contact your referring dentist

What can I do to help with healing?

- Rinse your mouth the following day with lukewarm salt water (one teaspoon of table salt to half a glass of warm water). Ideally do this four times a day, for several days, particularly after meals and last thing at night before bed
- This is not essential, if rinsing is not possible

If you experience any of the following difficulties contact 111

- Difficulties breathing
- Swallowing
- High temperature
- Facial swelling
- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Severe pain which is not relieved by medication

Dental fillings

Some filling materials need 24 hours to fully set, soft foods are advisable during this time.

Your teeth may become sensitive or feel different. If this does not settle down, or if you experience dental pain please contact the dentist.

Dentures

If a denture has been fitted following tooth extraction, it should be kept in place until the next morning. If it is loose, remove it overnight.

The following morning the denture should be removed, the mouth rinsed with warm salty mouthwash and any remaining teeth carefully brushed.

Brush and rinse the denture in cold water and replace immediately. The denture should be worn as much as possible to help you get used to it.

After the first night following your treatment, the denture should be left out each night. If there are any problems with the denture contact the dentist who made the denture.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

Before you leave the hospital, the dental team will let you know if you need a follow-up appointment.

You will receive this appointment through the post.

A letter explaining your dental treatment completed with us will be sent to your dentist.

If you have any concerns, contact your referring dentist.

If out of hours, contact 111.

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If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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