



# Helping Hands

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## GENERAL ANESTHESIA FOR DENTAL TREATMENT

General anesthesia is a way of giving medicine so the person is “asleep” and doesn’t feel anything, not even pain. Usually, a gas is inhaled through a mask, and then an IV is started which continues to administer the medications. Surgeons use this way of giving medicine when they operate so patients don’t feel any pain or remember what happened during the surgery.

### WHO MAY HAVE GENERAL ANESTHESIA FOR DENTAL CARE?

Sometimes we recommend that children have general anesthesia to have dental work done. We follow national guidelines for choosing the children who would best be treated under general anesthesia. The reasons for it may include any of the following:

- Child is too young to understand or cooperate for dental care (usually age 3 or less).
- Disability or physical, emotional or mental delay.
- Other significant medical problems.
- A large number of cavities in the teeth or the cavities are in a pattern that makes it difficult for the child to handle routine dental care.
- A child who is *very* fearful of medical or dental treatment.
- A child whose home is far away from the hospital or clinic.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are some risks of general anesthesia, especially when the child is not otherwise healthy. Complications include (but are not limited to): sore throat, nausea and vomiting, bloody nose, respiratory and cardiovascular (heart and lung) problems, temporary or permanent brain damage, and in *rare cases*, death. However, general anesthesia is extremely safe when used on a healthy child.

### IF GENERAL ANESTHESIA IS RECOMMENDED

- A doctor will give your child a physical exam to decide if your child can have general anesthesia.
- We will discuss with you ways to pay for the general anesthesia if it is needed. The cost of general anesthesia varies, and is separate from the cost of dentistry. Many insurance plans cover general anesthesia, but not all of them, so it’s important to talk about the financial details **before** the dental work is done.

## THE DAY OF GENERAL ANESTHESIA

- **It is VERY IMPORTANT that your child does not have anything to eat or drink after midnight before general anesthesia.** If your child's dental work is scheduled for the afternoon, please pay close attention to the anesthesiologist directions regarding when the child may last eat or drink.
- Please report Same Day Surgery. Your child will again be checked by a doctor. In some cases the doctor may order a liquid for your child to drink to help them relax.
- Your child may bring a favorite toy or blanket to surgery. After they are asleep in the Operating Room, the toy or blanket will be placed in your child's crib or cart so there is something familiar in bed after surgery.
- The anesthesiologist and dentist will talk with you; then your child will be taken into the Operating Room. A member of the OR team will take your child to the room (only Operating Room staff may be with your child beyond this point).
- Calmly tell your child that you need to go and that you will be there when they come back from surgery.
- Parents may wait in the Outpatient Surgery lobby or assigned room.
- Your child will be seated on a bed and the anesthesia medicine will be given through a face mask. It usually takes 30 to 45 seconds for the child to fall asleep. A blood pressure cuff will be put on. An IV will be started so we can give other medicines that help the anesthesia work. A breathing tube will be put in, usually through the nose, and the anesthesiologist will carefully control your child's breathing.
- The dentistry is then done.
- When it's completed, your child will be taken to a recovery room for about 45 minutes to wake up. You may then see your child. The doctors and nurses will let you know when your child is ready to be taken home.
- Following the procedure, the dentist will come and speak with you regarding the treatment which was provided and to provide post operative instructions.

## HOW TO GET READY

- Explain to your child what will happen in honest terms using simple words he or she will understand.
- Be sure to ask any questions you may have when general anesthesia is discussed.
- Follow instructions of the Hospital and dental staff.
- Be prepared to answer questions about any medicines your child is taking, and any recent exposure to contagious disease.
- Be ready to provide health and financial information as requested.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our office at **(970) 493-2254**.