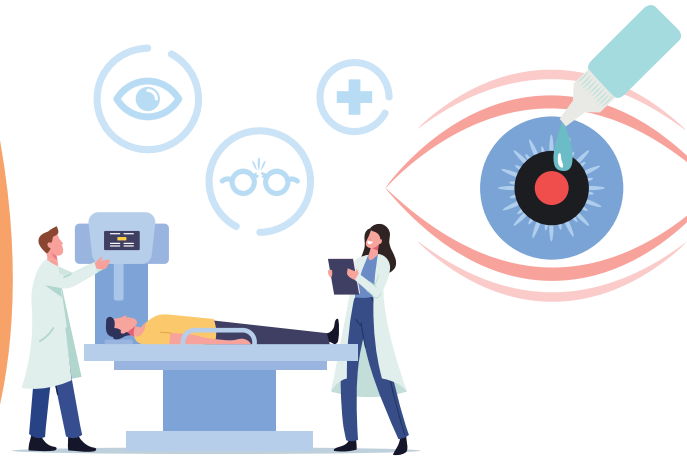




# Anaesthesia for Eye Surgery

If you need to undergo eye surgery, preparation will help to ensure that the experience is a positive one.



This pamphlet will:



Provide you with general information about anaesthesia for eye surgery



Encourage you to ask questions of your anaesthetist



Help you approach the planned procedure positively

If you have any further questions, you should ask your specialist or relevant health professional.



## Types of surgery

The most commonly performed eye surgeries are cataract extraction and intraocular lens insertion. Other types of eye surgery include glaucoma surgery, refractive surgery, corneal surgery, vitreo-retinal surgery and eye muscle (strabismus) surgery.



## You are in good hands

Australia is one of the safest places in the world to have an anaesthetic. Specialist anaesthetists in Australia are highly trained medical specialists. They have gone to medical school, completed an internship and spent at least five years undergoing specialist anaesthetic training. Training includes anaesthesia, pain management, resuscitation and the management of medical emergencies.



## Before the surgery

Your anaesthetist will want to know about your medical history. This may include seeing them in their rooms or a telehealth consultation before the date of your surgery. You might need further tests or consultations with other medical and health specialists before your surgery. Although these tests and investigations may delay your surgery, having you in the best condition prior to surgery is crucial

to a successful outcome and to your long-term health. Sometimes there may be a delay between your consultation and the date of your surgery. You must notify your anaesthetist if you develop any new medical conditions during this time.



## Your medications

Most medications can continue up until surgery. Blood thinners and diabetic medication require special consideration and you will be given specific instructions on what to do with these medications. If you are unsure, please ask your child's surgeon or anaesthetist.



## Preparation

Before your surgery, you will need to fast and not consume food or clear liquids. Generally, this is no food six hours prior to surgery and no clear liquids for two hours, however your anaesthetist will discuss this with you before the procedure.



## What to expect

Eye surgery can be performed with numbing eye drops. More complex eye surgery may be performed under an 'eye block' or general anaesthesia. The type

of anaesthesia is heavily dependent on the type of surgery, but also the preference of the anaesthetist or the patient.

**Eye drops:** Local anaesthetic eye drops can be used to numb the eye for surgery. The drops are applied directly to the eye and typically take 5-10 minutes to take effect. The advantage of eye drops is that they avoid the need for general anaesthesia and allow for a rapid recovery.

**Eye blocks:** An eye block is a procedure to numb the eye and prevent movement during surgery. It involves injecting a local anaesthetic around the eye, making the eye numb and immobile. Your other eye will be covered. Before performing an eye block your anaesthetist may give you relaxing medication. During the eye block or surgery, it is rare for you to feel any pain or discomfort. If this does happen, please tell your surgeon or anaesthetist so that extra medication can be given. If you feel any pain or discomfort, you will be able to express it and additional anaesthesia can be administered if necessary. The advantage of eye blocks is that they avoid the need for general anaesthesia and allow for a rapid recovery.

**Sedation:** This is sometimes called 'twilight anaesthesia' and is medication given intravenously to make you feel relaxed and drowsy. This is not the same as general anaesthesia and sometimes people remember parts of the operation, particularly conversations. Sedation can be given in combination with local anaesthetic eye drops or an eye block.

**General Anaesthesia:** General anaesthesia is what people describe as 'going to sleep'. The anaesthetist will insert a cannula into your vein and attach fluids (a drip). Before going under a general anaesthetic, you will usually be asked to breathe oxygen through a mask. Anaesthetic medications are usually given through the cannula to start the anaesthetic. Once you are fully 'asleep' a breathing tube will be placed in your windpipe to help with your breathing during surgery. Your anaesthetist will keep you 'asleep' and monitor you during the entire operation. It is normal to feel drowsy as you wake up.



## Post-Surgery

At the end of the operation, the anaesthetist will transport your child to the recovery room where they will be cared for by specially trained nursing staff. Your child will be discharged from recovery once the staff are happy that it is safe to do so, but this may take an hour or two after surgery. While you may feel anxious, it is not uncommon for your child to spend a few hours away from you while recovering.



## Risks to be aware of

Numbing eye drops for eye surgery are safe and effective. If you have the operation under an eye block, you may notice bruising or pain at the injection site. Bleeding behind the eye is a rare complication and if it was severe then you may require an operation. Damaging the eye itself or any other structures such as nerves, is very rare. Losing vision in that eye is an extremely rare but possible complication. General anaesthesia for eye surgery has the same risks as general anaesthesia for other surgeries.

General anaesthesia can make you feel drowsy afterwards. Nausea and vomiting are not uncommon and anti-nausea drugs will be available. Other short term side effects can include bruising, fatigue, headache, sore throat, or sleep disturbance. You may experience other complications such as damage to the teeth, breathing problems or muscle pains. While extremely rare, serious side effects such as severe allergic reaction, heart attack, stroke, seizure, lung damage, pneumonia, eye injury, damage to the vocal cords or infection exist. Remember that the risks of these more serious complications, including death, are very rare.

You are encouraged to ask your anaesthetist any questions you may have. They will be more than happy to answer them and discuss the best and safest plan for you and your surgery.

This pamphlet provides general information about anaesthesia for eye surgery. It is not a substitute for advice provided by your specialist about your personal treatment plan. Every effort is made to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the accuracy or completeness of the information provided. This information may change with time due to advancements in clinical research and knowledge. Use this pamphlet only in consultation with your specialist. We prefer our members to link to our website rather than print or republish our materials on your own website to ensure you have access to the most up-to-date version. For the latest version please visit the ASA Website. Last reviewed 12/03/24.

