

## **Information for Patients**

We recognize that going to sleep for surgery provokes anxiety in some patients, and this loss of control involves a great degree of trust of the operative team. The department of anesthesia is committed to developing a thorough understanding of you and your medical issues to make your surgery a positive and safe experience. Our services include preoperative evaluation, intraoperative care, and post operative evaluation and pain control.

### **Common Questions and Concerns –**

#### **1. What are the main complications of receiving anesthesia for surgery?**

- Common complications include postoperative nausea and sore throat. Soreness to injection sites, allergies, and damage to loose teeth are less common. All of the medications we use have well-known impacts on blood pressure, respiration, muscle tone, consciousness, and metabolism. We monitor your body's function closely during the operation and have additional fluids and medications prepared to maintain physiologic stability. Some very rare reactions to inhaled anesthetics that run in families can cause elevations in body temperature. We have specific antidotes for this type of problem. We take great care to minimize all of these potential problems.

#### **2. What are the things my anesthesiologist must absolutely know?**

- Known medical problems
- Medications including herbal medicines
- Allergies to medications
- Prior surgeries and prior experiences with anesthesia
- If you or any blood relative has had any complications with anesthesia
- If during a prior surgery or planned surgery anyone told you that you have a "difficult airway."
- If you have any implanted pacemaker, stimulator or drug pump, please let your anesthesiologist look over whatever card or other information you received in connection with the procedure

#### **3. What if I am pregnant or not sure?**

- Please advise your anesthesiologist and surgeon. A simple pregnancy test can be conducted and the results can be used to better understand the various risks and benefits of having surgery. Some surgeries are quite safe for both you and baby at certain times within the pregnancy, and should be avoided in others.

#### **4. Why does everyone read my arm band and ask my name, do they know what they are doing?**

- Multiple checks assure that the right operations and medicines are paired with the right patients. Although rare, medicine swaps and wrong site surgery can be further prevented with multiple checks.

**5. If I had some food by accident, should I keep this to myself?**

- No; please advise a nurse, doctor or other staff member. Safe timing of surgery and anesthesia depend on knowing when food and liquids are ingested. Taking morning pills with small sips of water is permissible.

**6. Can I be harmed by anesthesia?**

- Unlike antibiotics or other disease modifying agents, anesthesia drugs are not intrinsically therapeutic; they are used to facilitate pain free surgery, and do have side effects. Like other drugs, allergies and other unplanned reactions can occur, but are rare. Respiratory depression can result from pain medicines, and this is figured into plans for post-operative observation and recovery.

**7. What if I have a serious medical condition and do not wish to be resuscitated?**

- Please bring this up with your surgeon and anesthesiologist during a preoperative visit. Often the interventions people wish to avoid (such as receiving help with breathing, or receiving fluids and drugs to support blood pressure or heart rhythm) are part of routine perioperative care, so it is best to suspend a DNR order during surgery and recovery.

**8. Do I have to tell my doctor about herbal medicines?**

- Yes, these are just as important as prescribed medicines in many cases. Allergies, interactions with other medications, and impacts on specific organs and metabolic pathways have been described for nearly all products on the market. If we are unsure about the impacts of a certain medicine, we may take the cautious approach of asking you to not take the medicine until you have safely recovered from the operation.