


# your anaesthetic care



ANAESTHESIA  
for CATARACT  
and other  
EYE SURGERY



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## What is a local anaesthetic?

These days cataract and other eye surgery can be performed under local anaesthetic, that is, with the eye numbed while the patient is awake. It is often difficult for patients to imagine having an eye operation under local anaesthetic, and some patients may be concerned. However most patients who have a local anaesthesia during eye surgery are comfortable and satisfied with the anaesthetic.

## What are the benefits of local anaesthesia during cataract surgery?

The main benefit of local anaesthesia during eye surgery is that it avoids the need and possible side effects of a general anaesthetic such as nausea and vomiting and confusion (in elderly patients) after the operation. Eating and drinking can be resumed sooner when a general anaesthetic is avoided and recovery is generally more rapid. Pain is minimized when local anaesthesia is used because the eye is numbed. Usually the patient can go home the same day when local anaesthesia is used.

## When is a local anaesthetic not suitable for cataract surgery?

These days it is uncommon for eye surgery to be performed under general anaesthesia, however sometimes it is still necessary.

General anaesthetics are used when a patient is unable to lie still or has a significant head tremor, extreme anxiety or claustrophobia or an allergy to local anaesthesia. Children are more likely to require a general anaesthetic.

## Preparing for Surgery

There are several things you can do to help make your anaesthesia easier and safer.

### 1. Fasting

- + It is essential that you have an empty stomach at the time of your anaesthetic. This is to reduce the risks and the chance of you feeling sick after your anaesthetic.
- + For these reasons you must not eat food or milk products for SIX HOURS before coming to hospital on the day of surgery.
- + You may drink clear fluids (water, cordial, strained fruit juices, black tea/coffee) up until TWO HOURS before coming to hospital.
- + If your child is having the anaesthetic and they are under 6 months old, please contact the Anaesthetic Group Ballarat for specific fasting instructions.
- + If you do not follow these rules your procedure may need to be postponed.

### 2. Medications

Unless given special instructions, continue to take all your usual prescribed medications up to and including the day of surgery.

## Exceptions

- + On the morning of your surgery DO NOT take diuretic/water tablets (e.g. Lasix) OR diabetic tablets.
- + If you take insulin, please seek advice from your diabetes educator, endocrinologist, or our practice nurse.
- + If you take strong blood thinners (e.g. Warfarin, Plavix, Iscover) please make sure your surgeon knows in advance. (Aspirin is usually OK)

## How is the local anaesthetic performed?

The local anaesthetic is administered in the anaesthetic room of the operating department on your hospital trolley. Before starting, your anaesthetist will usually place an intravenous cannula in your hand as a precaution, in case you need other drugs administered through it later. You may be given some sedation medication through the intravenous cannula at this stage to help you relax. For surgery for cataracts, glaucoma, retinal detachment and corneal grafts, local anaesthetic is then injected around the eye socket using a very fine needle. Your anaesthetist will ask you to move your eyeballs to assess the effectiveness of the local anaesthetic, before surgery begins.

## What happens during the operation?

Once the local anaesthetic is working, you will be moved into the operating room on the trolley. It is important that you feel relatively comfortable, as you will need to lie in this position for approximately 30 minutes.

Monitoring, such as ECG and blood pressure cuff will be placed on you so that your anaesthetist can closely monitor your heart and breathing during the operation.

Your face will be covered by a sterile drape and your other eye taped for protection, leaving only the eye to be operated on exposed. For your comfort, the anaesthetist will ensure you have plenty of space for breathing while your face is covered.

## How fast will I recover from the local anaesthetic?

Every person recovers differently to different anaesthetics. While most patients go home a few hours after surgery, some may have to stay overnight depending on your medical condition.

After the operation, you may have slight pain, which should be relieved with simple pain relieving drugs such as paracetamol. For cataract surgery you will be given topical eye antibiotic ointment, along with other medical instructions before you go home.

# What are the possible complications of local anaesthesia for eye surgery?

Local anaesthesia is safe and effective but does have some risks you need to be aware of.

## These include:

- + Bruising around the eye that usually heals in a few days.
- + Droop of the upper lid. The exact cause of this is unknown and most cases recover untreated in a few days.
- + The injection may cause significant bleeding which would postpone the operation.
- + Damage to the eye or surrounding nerves by the needle or local anaesthetic can occur and is extremely rare.

## Contact Details

If you have any questions either before or after your anaesthetic please contact the **Anaesthetic Group Ballarat** on **03 5331 4888** or visit our website at **[www.agb.com.au](http://www.agb.com.au)**