

Types of Anesthesia

Though the type of anesthesia is usually predetermined, the final decision is made by the Anesthesia attending that is monitoring your case. This doctor will see you the morning of surgery and discuss with you the different options if available.

GENERAL

General anesthesia is used for many types of major surgery. During general anesthesia the entire body, including the brain is anesthetized. The patient has no awareness, feels nothing and remembers nothing of the surgical experience afterward. General anesthesia is administered by injecting a liquid anesthetic into a vein, or by breathing a gas anesthetic flowing from an anesthesia machine to the patient through a mask or tube. A plastic endotracheal tube or a mask placed over the airway is frequently used to administer gas anesthetics. With the tube in place, the airway is protected from aspiration of stomach fluids into the lungs. It is normal to have a slight sore throat after your surgery.

REGIONAL

Injection of anesthetic into the neck region for shoulder and elbow surgery blocks pain impulses before they reach the brain. With this anesthetic, mental alertness is unaffected. Sedation, or even sleep may be offered to make you comfortable throughout the surgical experience. To receive the injection, you lie down while the anesthetic is injected into the neck or shoulder region. To make placement of the needle almost painless, your skin is first numbed with local anesthetic. This anesthetic may last for 6 to 8 hours and sometimes longer. It is important to start taking your postoperative pain medicine as soon as you begin to feel the onset of discomfort or when the numbness begins to wear off.