

Anaesthesia

Anaesthetic drugs enable pain free procedures. The three main types of anaesthesia are “local” and “general” anaesthesia, and local anaesthesia combined with sedation. Dr Boorer administers local anaesthesia for suitable procedures in the private rooms, whereas the other types of anaesthesia are always administered by a specialist anaesthetist. The decision to use local or general anaesthesia depends upon the type of procedure to be performed, the presence of co-existing medical problems, and whenever possible, patient choice. Dr Boorer will discuss suitable anaesthesia options with you during your initial consultation.

Local anaesthesia

Local anaesthesia involves directly administering the anaesthetic drug via a fine needle into the skin at the site of the proposed procedure (for example to remove a small skin cancer or mole). This technique enables Dr Boorer to perform pain free procedures on specific body regions without affecting consciousness. The immediate area around the injection site becomes numb after several minutes.

Injection of local anaesthesia usually causes a stinging sensation for several seconds at the injection site. Other temporary consequences may include minor swelling, and bruising. The anaesthetic effect usually wears off after 2-3 hours. As there is no alteration in consciousness you will be able to walk or drive home after the procedure.

Because high doses of local anaesthetic can have adverse effects upon the brain and heart, the maximal amount of local anaesthetic that can be given at any one time is limited. This in turn limits the size of procedures that can be safely performed in the private rooms.

General anaesthetic

In addition to making procedures pain free, the drugs used for general anaesthesia also bring about a reversible loss of consciousness. General anaesthesia affects the whole body, enabling larger and more complex procedures to be performed without the patient feeling any pain or being aware of their surroundings. This type of anaesthetic is usually administered by inhalation (breathing in an anaesthetic gas) and intravenously (through an injection into a vein). Once the patient is under general anaesthesia, local anaesthetic is also often administered to aid with pain relief after the procedure is completed.

When a patient is under general anaesthesia their breathing needs to be supported and their vital signs need regular monitoring. For this reason general anaesthesia is best administered in a fully accredited hospital by a fully qualified anaesthetist.

Australia is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world in which to have a general anaesthetic. This is due to the high quality of training Australian anaesthetists receive, as well as the high standards and equipment in Australian hospitals. Dr Boorer only works with highly experienced specialist anaesthetists in hospitals that meet the highest accreditation standards.

General anaesthetics can be used for ‘Day stay’ procedures as well as procedures requiring overnight admission. You are not permitted to drive or operate machinery for 24hrs after general anaesthetic.

Use of all therapeutic drugs may be associated with complications. The complications of general anaesthesia are rarely life threatening and most are treatable. They include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- A sore throat for 1-2days
- Tiredness
- Deep venous thrombosis (uncommon)
- Chest infection (uncommon)
- Heart attack (rare)
- Allergic reaction (rare)
- Death (very rare)

Local anaesthetic combined with sedation

Sedation, also known as 'twilight anaesthesia' involves administering small doses of anaesthetic with relaxant drugs to bring about a slight decrease in the patient's level of consciousness. When sedated, patients feel relaxed, less anxious and sleepy. They are able to move, respond to simple commands and breath unassisted.

As the patient is not completely unconscious it is also necessary to use local anaesthetic to make the procedure pain free. Sedation is given first to minimise the awareness of the local anaesthetic injection.

The advantage of local anaesthetic combined with sedation (over general anaesthesia) is that recovery is usually swifter and there is less chance of complications, particularly for the elderly and for patients with multiple medical problems. Unfortunately this type of anaesthetic is not suitable for larger or more complex procedures.

If you will require either general anaesthesia or local anaesthetic combined with sedation, Dr Boorer will arrange for a highly experienced specialist anaesthetist to discuss the above issues with you in more detail and address any queries or concerns that you may have.