

What You Should Know About Anesthesia Before Going in for Surgery

On behalf of Ukiah Valley Medical Center, Anesthesiologist David DeBooy, MD, answers some frequently asked questions about the use of general anesthesia during surgery.

An estimated 20 million patients undergo surgery with general anesthesia annually in the United States. Whether you're planning to have surgery, know someone who is, or want to be prepared "just in case," you need to know the facts about anesthesia.

- **Why is general anesthesia necessary?** General anesthesia is what most people think of when a doctor says, "anesthesia." It is used to make the patient unconsciousness, prevent pain, and restrict movement to maintain a "quiet" operating field for the surgeon during the operation.
- **What types of anesthetic drugs are used?** General anesthesia is composed of multiple drugs: a hypnotic drug to induce sleep, an analgesic to prevent pain, and sometimes a muscle relaxant to restrict movement. General anesthetics are typically used for longer, more invasive procedures.
- **What are the potential side-effects of anesthesia?** Giving a patient too little or too much anesthetic could produce unwanted side-effects. Too much anesthetic can sometimes lead to muscle aches, drowsiness, nausea and vomiting. Given too little anesthetic, patients can awaken during surgery and experience "intraoperative awareness." Though highly uncommon, approximately one to two patients out of every thousand receiving general anesthesia experience awareness with recall¹ – an adverse outcome that can be traumatic for both the patient and the provider.
- **What's that anesthesia monitor I've been hearing about?**
The BIS™ monitor, which Ukiah Valley Medical Center just purchased and began using, is a technology that directly measures the effects of anesthetics and sedatives on the brain. The BIS monitor enables the anesthesia provider to administer more precise quantities of anesthetic for each patient, thus reducing the risk of awareness with recall, and enabling patients to wake-up faster, feel more alert, and experience less nausea and vomiting after surgery.

For more information about anesthesia and Ukiah Valley Medical Center's use of the BIS monitor, contact UVMC's Director of Surgery, Rosemary Richards, RN at (707) 463 7659.

¹Sebel P, Bowdle A. The incidence of awareness during anesthesia: a multicenter US study. ASA 2003 (A-360).