



Having a radiology procedure under general anaesthetic

This leaflet explains what to expect if you are having a general anaesthetic for a procedure in the Radiology (X-ray) Department.

Why do I need a general anaesthetic?

Some radiology procedures (such as MRI, CT-guided procedures, or interventional radiology) require you to stay completely still or may be uncomfortable. A general anaesthetic means you will be asleep for the procedure and feel no pain.

Preparing for your anaesthetic

Being as well prepared as possible helps you recover more quickly and safely.

Pre-assessment

- You may be contacted by the pre-assessment team or anaesthetist before your procedure.
- They will ask about your medical history, medications, allergies, and previous anaesthetics.
- Blood tests or other investigations may be arranged.

Eating and drinking

- **No food or milk** for 6 hours before your procedure.
- **Clear fluids** (water, black coffee, black tea) may be allowed up to 2 hours before – follow the instructions you are given.
- It is important to follow these instructions to reduce the risk of vomiting during the anaesthetic.

Medications

- Continue your usual medications unless advised otherwise.
- Bring a list of your medications with you.
- If you have diabetes, heart conditions, or take blood thinners, you may receive specific instructions.

Getting fitter before your procedure

Even small steps can help:

- Stay as active as you can.
- Eat regular, balanced meals.
- Stop smoking if possible (even stopping for a short time helps).
- Limit your alcohol intake.

These steps are part of the “**Fitter, Better, Sooner**” approach, which aims to improve recovery and reduce complications. If you would like more information or advice regarding this, please see coa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner, or ask your preoperative team for more information.

On the day of the procedure

Arrival

- Please arrive at the time stated in your letter.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- A nurse will check your observations (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels).

Before the anaesthetic

You will meet your anaesthetist, who will:

- Ask about your medical history.
- Explain the anaesthetic plan.
- Answer any questions.
- Modern anaesthesia is very safe. Serious complications are rare. Your anaesthetist will discuss any specific risks related to your health and procedure.

During the procedure

- A small plastic tube (cannula) will be placed in your hand or arm.
- Monitoring will be attached (heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels).
- You will go to sleep using medication through the cannula or a mask.
- The procedure is carried out by the radiology team while the anaesthetist looks after you throughout, monitoring your breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen levels.

After the procedure

Recovery

- You will wake up in a recovery area.
- Nurses will monitor you closely.
- You may feel sleepy, dizzy, or slightly sick at first. Medication will be provided if needed. These effects usually settle quickly.

Going home or to the ward

- Some patients go home the same day, others return to the ward – this will depend on the procedure you are having and your recovery afterwards.
- You must have a responsible adult to accompany you home if discharged the same day and you must not drive home after the procedure.
- Do not drive, drink alcohol, or make important decisions for 24 hours after a general anaesthetic.

When to seek help after discharge

Contact the Radiology Department on 0118 322 8368 or seek medical advice if you experience:

- Persistent vomiting.
- Severe pain not controlled with painkillers.
- Breathing difficulties.
- Chest pain or fever.

Helping your recovery

After your procedure:

- Start eating and drinking as advised.
- Mobilise early if safe to do so.
- Take pain relief as prescribed.
- Follow other discharge advice carefully.

Good recovery is a partnership between you and your healthcare team. Please let us know if we can help you.

Questions or concerns?

If you have questions before your appointment, please contact:

- Your pre-assessment team
- The radiology department
- Your GP for general health optimisation advice

This leaflet supports the Royal College of Anaesthetists“ 'Fitter, Better, Sooner” principles, helping patients prepare well, recover sooner, and reduce complications.

Contact details

Radiology Department 0118 322 8368 or email rbft.radiologyadmin@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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