

Topical local anaesthetic (LA)

Operations to remove a cataract from the lens of the eye, and other procedures on the surface of the eye, can be carried out using this simple method. Topical methods are not appropriate for more complex cataract operations, or for operations involving the back of the eyeball. In these cases, the local anaesthetic is given as an injection (see the separate information leaflet called 'Sub-Tenon's block').

What is topical local anaesthetic?

Topical means 'applied to the outer surface'. This involves using eyedrops containing local anaesthetic that have been specially manufactured for use on the sensitive surface of the eye. There is no need for any needle or injection when drops or gel are used.

Will I need to fast?

No, even if you are having light sedation. With topical LA, you do not need to stop eating or drinking before the operation because your stomach and digestion will not be at risk of being upset in the way that can happen with heavy sedation or a general anaesthetic (GA).

You can eat and drink as normal. Please remember to take any regular medication as usual, unless your doctor or pre-operative assessment nurse has advised otherwise.

If you are diabetic, please make sure you maintain regular meal times and take your medication as usual. Your operation will not be able to take place if your blood sugar level is too high.

If you are very anxious, it may be suggested that you have light sedation with a drug that calms you down.

Other advice

Please bring a pair of slippers and an extra shirt/blouse/top.

Additional information on the use of local anaesthesia for eye operations can be found in the more detailed leaflet called 'Having an eye operation under local anaesthetic'.

Contact information

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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