

## Anaesthesia

A lesson by Anna Dàvidovics and Catherine Richards

Level B1-B2

### Vocabulary

- Fill the gaps in the text with the missing words. There are two words that you do not need.

*block*

*anaesthetics*

*sleep*

*nerve*

*sensation*

*relaxed*

*numb*

*consciousness*

Anaesthesia means 1. "loss of ..... ". Medications that cause anaesthesia are called 2. .... . These medications are used during tests and surgical operations to 3. .... certain areas of the body or induce 4. .... . This prevents pain and discomfort and enables a wide range of medical procedures to be carried out.

During the procedure the 5. .... signals that keep you awake and aware are stopped from reaching your brain. After the medications have worn off, 6. .... and feeling will return.

As well as local and general anaesthetic, there are several other types of anaesthesia.

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaesthesia/>

- Match the type of anaesthesia (1 –6) with its definition (A –F). The first has been done for you. Compare your answers with your partner/group.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
C					

**1. local**

**A.** where you're totally unconscious and unaware of the procedure – often used for more serious operations

**2. general**

**B.** medication that makes you feel sleepy and relaxes you both physically and mentally; it's sometimes used to keep you calm during minor, painful or unpleasant procedures.

**3. regional**

**C.** where a small area of the body is numbed and you remain fully conscious – often used during minor procedures

- 4. **spinal**                    D. a type of procedure when a local anaesthetic is injected into the epidural space of the spinal column. Used to numb the lower half of the body
- 5. **epidural**                E. anaesthetic given to a specific area of your body, leading to numbness or pain relief for deeper operations where more extensive numbness is needed
- 6. **sedation**                F. a procedure where regional anaesthetic is injected into the dural sac containing cerebrospinal fluid. Numbs the lower half of the body

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaesthesia/>

3. Now work with a partner and decide which type of anaesthetic is typically used in the following situations. Sometimes more than one answer is correct.

- a. tooth extraction                    \_\_\_\_\_
- b. caesarean section                    \_\_\_\_\_
- c. inserting a pacemaker \_\_\_\_\_
- d. MRI exam                                    \_\_\_\_\_
- e. colonoscopy                                    \_\_\_\_\_
- f. major surgery                                    \_\_\_\_\_
- g. skin biopsy                                    \_\_\_\_\_
- h. endoscopy                                    \_\_\_\_\_
- i. knee surgery                                    \_\_\_\_\_

**Video**

4. What questions do surgery patients have about general anaesthesia? Discuss in pairs.

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5. Now watch the video where an aesthetist and a surgeon discuss general anaesthesia. Are any of the questions the same as yours?

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZV6kwu\\_HvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZV6kwu_HvI) ).

6. Watch again and answer the questions below using short phrases/notes.

- a. Is the anaesthetic procedure safe?
- b. What steps are taken to ensure its safety?
- c. Is it dangerous for older people to have general anaesthetic?
- d. What is said regarding the risk of anaesthesia and:

*long-term memory loss:*

*dying:*

- e. What does Dr Sacks do for anxious patients?

## Reading

Patients are often nervous about having surgery, and anaesthesia is a significant cause of anxiety – but what worries patients specifically? Compare your ideas with your partner.

7. Now read the following research abstract:

***Patient's anxiety and fear of anesthesia: effect of gender, age, education, and previous experience of anesthesia. A survey of 400 patients***

Paraskevi Mavridou, Varvara Dimitriou, Adamantia Manataki, Elena Arnaoutoglou, Georgios Papadopoulos

J Anesth. 2013 Feb;27(1):104-8. doi: 10.1007/s00540-012-1460-0. Epub 2012 Aug 3.

**Purpose:** Patients express high anxiety preoperatively, because of fears related to anaesthesia and its implications. The purpose of this survey was to gain insight into these fears and to study whether they are affected by patients' sex, age, education, or previous experience of anaesthesia.

**Methods:** Questionnaires with fixed questions were distributed to consenting, consecutive surgical patients before the pre-anaesthetic visit. The questionnaires included patients' demographics and questions related to their fears about anaesthesia.

**Results:** Four-hundred questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Eighty-one percent of patients experience preoperative anxiety. The main sources of their anxiety were fear of postoperative pain (84 %), of not waking up after surgery (64.8 %), of being nauseous or vomiting (60.2 %), and of drains and needles (59.5 %). Patients are less concerned about being paralyzed because of anaesthesia (33.5 %) or of revealing personal issues (18.8 %). Women seem slightly more afraid (85.3 vs. 75.6 % of men,  $p = 0.014$ ). The effects of patients' age, level of education, and previous experience of anaesthesia are minor, except for individual questions. Sixty-three percent of our patients (women 67.4 vs. 57.4 % of men,  $p = 0.039$ ) talk about these fears with their relatives, although a vast majority of 95.5 % would prefer to talk with the anaesthesiologist and be reassured by him.

**Conclusion:** All patients express fears about anaesthesia; this fear leads to preoperative anxiety. Slight differences are observed for some individual questions among patients of different sex, education level, and previous experience of anaesthesia.

1. Does anything surprise you about these findings? What?
2. What might explain the differences reported between the sexes?
3. What might be the relevancy of education level or previous experience of anaesthesia?
4. At your place of work, does the anaesthesiologist speak with patients before surgery?

## Speaking

8. What would you say to a patient who expresses fear or worry about his/her planned surgery? Work with a partner to formulate some possible responses. Check procedure information online if unsure.

### **Your patient says:**

*‘I’m too old for general anaesthetic. I might not wake up’*  
(hip replacement)

*‘ I’m having an epidural – but I don’t think that’s enough!  
I want a spinal block.’*  
(child birth)

*‘ I want a regional anaesthetic – I don’t want a general anaesthetic.  
I’ve heard regional is safer.’*  
(back surgery)

*‘ I’m worried I won’t wake up. I know it happens’*  
(knee surgery)

*‘Last time I had general anaesthetic it made me so nauseous. I was  
shivering and shaking after the op too. Is that going to happen again?’*  
( general surgery)

*‘ The spinal anaesthetic could paralyse me. I’m scared’*  
( caesarean section)

*‘ Can’t you give me a patch or a pill? Injections scare me and  
I know it’s going to hurt.’*  
(wisdom tooth extraction)

### **You say:**

## Putting it all together: Roleplay

9. Read the cards carefully so you understand your role and what is required.  
The 'Medical Professional' can check the details of the procedure online if necessary.  
Remember to be empathetic! Remember to use patient-friendly language.

Swop roles and repeat.

### Medical professional

You are a doctor/nurse ( choose depending on your profession) talking to a 30-year-old patient who is booked in for a colonoscopy this morning.. He/she seems nervous.

#### Task

1. Find out about their concerns and empathise with them
2. When asked, explain what anaesthesia is used, how it is administered. Explain why it is used and its benefits.
3. Reassure the patient when he/she expresses concerns about the safety of the anaesthetic.

### Patient

You are booked in for a colonoscopy this morning. This is your first time in hospital and you're feeling very nervous. You're worried about the procedure and don't understand what exactly it is. Nor do you understand what is meant by general and local, etc.

You cannot tolerate pain and want to be completely asleep for this procedure if possible. You're 30 years old and work as an electrician. You need to return to work as soon as possible.

#### Task

- Ask the medical professional about the procedure and the anaesthetic used.
- Tell the medical professional that you're worried about pain and want to be asleep during the procedure
- Ask the medical professional if you can go back to work immediately after the procedure. You're very worried about losing your job.

## Role play 2

### **Medical professional**

You are an anaestheologist / surgeon / nurse ( choose depending on your profession) talking to an 80-year-old patient who is booked in for a hip replacement tomorrow.. He/she seems nervous.

Task

4. Find out about their concerns and empathise with them
5. When asked, explain what anaesthesia is used, how it is administered. Explain why it is used and its benefits.
6. Reassure the patient when he/she expresses concerns about the safety of the anaesthetic.

### **Patient**

You are 80 years old and are booked in for a hip replacement tomorrow. You're feeling very nervous. You think you might be too old for a general anaesthetic and are worried that you will not wake up again.

This is your second hip replacement. You had a strange reaction after the first operation – you were shivering and trembling when you woke up and it frightened you. You think this is proof of a bad reaction to general anaesthetic.

You live alone. You're worried that you will be sent home too quickly and you won't be able to manage. You're thinking it might be better not to have the hip replacement.

Task

- Tell the medical professional of your concerns regarding your age. Ask if there is an alternative to general anaesthetic for this operation.
- Tell the medical professional about your bad reaction last time. Ask if it is normal.
- Tell the medical professional of the post-operative pain you experienced last time and your concerns about managing alone at home.

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(NB No answers given for Reading & Speaking tasks)

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*anaesthetics (2)*

*sleep (4)*

*nerve (5)*

*sensation (1)*

*relaxed*

*numb (3)*

*consciousness (6)*

Anaesthesia means 1. "loss of ..... ". Medications that cause anaesthesia are called 2. .... . These medications are used during tests and surgical operations to 3. .... certain areas of the body or induce 4. .... . This prevents pain and discomfort and enables a wide range of medical procedures to be carried out.

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<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>B</b>

**1. local**

**A.** where you're totally unconscious and unaware of the procedure – often used for more serious operations

**2. general**

**B.** medication that makes you feel sleepy and relaxes you both physically and mentally; it's sometimes used to keep you calm during minor, painful or unpleasant procedures. Various levels exist, from light to deep.

- |                    |                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3. regional</b> | <b>C. where a small area of the body is numbed and you remain fully conscious – often used during minor procedures</b>                                 |
| <b>4. spinal</b>   | D. a type of procedure when a local anaesthetic is injected into the epidural space of the spinal column. Used to numb the lower half of the body      |
| <b>5. epidural</b> | E. anaesthetic given to a specific area of your body, leading to numbness or pain relief for deeper operations where more extensive numbness is needed |
| <b>6. sedation</b> | F. a procedure where regional anaesthetic is injected into the dural sac containing cerebrospinal fluid. Numbs the lower half of the body              |

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3. Now work with a partner and decide which type of anaesthetic is typically used in the following situations. Sometimes more than one answer is correct.

- |                          |                                                       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| a. tooth extraction      | <i>local sedation (general – if necessary)</i>        |
| b. caesarean section     | <i>epidural spinal</i>                                |
| c. inserting a pacemaker | <i>general</i>                                        |
| d. MRI exam              | <i>sedation (if necessary) general (if necessary)</i> |
| e. colonoscopy           | <i>sedation</i>                                       |
| f. major surgery         | <i>general</i>                                        |
| g. skin biopsy           | <i>local</i>                                          |
| h. endoscopy             | <i>local (spray) sedation general (if necessary)</i>  |
| i. knee surgery          | <i>local general spinal epidural</i>                  |

## Video

4. What questions do surgery patients have about general anaesthesia? Discuss in pairs.
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([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZV6kwu\\_HvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZV6kwu_HvI)).

6. Watch again and answer the questions below using short phrases/notes.

a. Is the anaesthetic procedure safe?

*Yes – made safe in a variety of ways.*

b. What steps are taken to ensure its safety?

*Preparation: Medical history; specific history – joint. Information gathered.*

*Monitoring: All vital signs monitored continuously during surgery.*

c. Is it dangerous for older people to have general anaesthetic?

*No patient is too old. Elderly patients have same risk profile as younger patients, depending on medical history. All depends on their physical status.*

d. What is said regarding the risk of anaesthesia and:

long-term memory loss:

*Many studies done to examine memory loss. No evidence that anaesthetic causes memory loss.*

dying:

*Everybody has this fear but deaths under anaesthetic are very rare. If it occurs it's usually in patients who are very sick with multiple health issues and preparation has been poor. Very uncommon.*

*Anaesthetics are much safer these days.*

e. What does Dr Sacks do for anxious patients?

*Interviews patients to understand specific anxiety. Goes over what can be done to minimise their specific anxiety. Communicates with patient.*

