

# After anesthesia – caring for your teen

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## What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia is a kind of medicine that is given to keep people comfortable and/or asleep during a test, procedure or surgery

It is common for your teen to feel sleepy, and they may have nausea and vomiting (throwing up). Some patients will get an I.V. and I.V. fluids during surgery to help avoid dehydration. (An I.V. is a way to give your teen fluids and medicines, which are carried through a thin, plastic tube into a vein.)

## What are the common side effects?

Your teen may:

- Feel disoriented, groggy and a little confused when waking up from anesthesia.
- Have nausea or throwing up, which most often gets better after taking anti-nausea medicine.
- Have chills or feel shaky.
- Have a sore throat.

## How do I care for my teen after anesthesia?

A member of the care team will explain the doctor's instructions. Some guidelines to follow include:

- Until fully awake:
  - Stay with your teen.
  - Keep the lights, activity and noise levels low. This will help your teen rest.
- Some teens may become restless from the anesthesia. Calm and reassure your teen if this happens. This should wear off within a few hours.
- Provide quiet indoor activities, such as listening to music, reading or watching TV. Avoid activities that need balance and coordination, such as biking, swimming and skating, for at least 24 hours after anesthesia (as advised by the doctor).
- Do not leave your teen at home alone for the next 24 hours.
- Your teen should not play sports until the doctor says it is OK.
- Teens should not drive and should know that drinking alcohol is dangerous when recovering from anesthesia.

## What can I give my teen to drink and eat after anesthesia?

A member of the care team will explain the doctor's instructions. Some guidelines to follow include:

- Give clear liquids, such as juice, Gatorade or popsicles, until your teen is fully awake and alert (or as the doctor instructs).

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# After anesthesia – caring for your teen, continued

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- Advance to your teen’s normal diet when your teen:
  - Is fully awake.
  - Can drink liquids without throwing up.
- Start with foods that are low in fat and easy to digest. This might include toast, crackers, cereal, rice or mashed potatoes.
- If your teen throws up, avoid giving food and liquids for 1 hour. Then, offer small sips of clear liquid or some ice chips. Your teen may try sports drinks like Gatorade or carbonated drinks like Ginger Ale or Sprite.

## How do I care for a teen with special needs?

- Your teen may need more help than normal for the next 24 hours.
- Help your teen with their adaptive equipment, such as a wheelchair or walker.
- Your teen may wake up disoriented, upset or crying. This is normal and most often passes quickly. Every teen reacts differently to anesthesia and sedation.

## When should I call my teen’s doctor?

Call the doctor if your teen:

- Keeps throwing up (throws up more than 3 times within the first 4 hours after anesthesia).
- Has a fever of 101.3°F or higher.
- Is very restless or agitated and cannot be calmed after a few hours.
- Is hard to wake up or is not fully awake after 6 hours. You should be able to wake your teen. It is OK if your teen goes back to sleep again after you wake them.

Call the doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your teen looks or feels.

## When should I call 911?

Call 911 **right away** if your teen has signs of breathing problems. This might include:

- Fast or shallow breathing
- Labored breathing (hard to breathe)
- Chest retractions (skin pulls in around the ribs and chest when breathing)
- A blue or dark purple color to the nails, lips or gums
- Wheezing or grunting
- Chest pain or tightness

Also call if your teen is very hard to wake up.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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