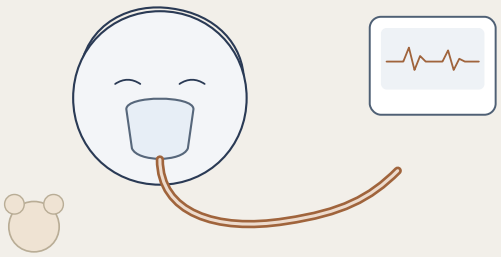
Professor Jason John Labuschagne
PAEDIATRIC AND ADULT NEUROSURGEON

PAEDIATRIC NEUROSURGERY

Your Child's Anaesthetic

Information for parents and guardians



This leaflet explains what happens when a child has a general anaesthetic for neurosurgery or a scan. Your child's anaesthetic is given by a specialist paediatric anaesthetist, who will meet you beforehand, explain the plan and risks in detail and obtain your consent for the anaesthetic separately.

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PATIENT DETAILS OR HOSPITAL LABEL

Child's name

Date of birth

Parent / guardian

Hospital / file no.

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Netcare Unitas Hospital
Room 403, Centurion

Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital
Private Suites, First Floor, 6 Jubilee Road, Parktown North

012 664 6026
HPCSA MP 0530077

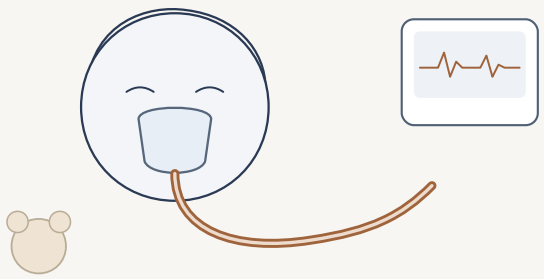
01 General information

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is a carefully controlled, deep, medicine-induced sleep, during which your child feels no pain and has no awareness or memory of the operation. The anaesthetist stays with your child throughout, monitoring breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels and temperature, and adjusts the medicines continuously. When the operation is finished, the medicines are stopped and your child wakes up.

Before the day

- Tell us if your child has a cough, cold, fever, vomiting or diarrhoea in the days before surgery, or has been in contact with chickenpox or measles; the anaesthetic may need to be postponed.
- Tell us about any medical conditions, medicines, allergies, loose teeth, snoring or sleep apnoea, and any problems with anaesthesia in your child or family.
- Prepare your child honestly in words suited to their age. Books, play and a visit to the hospital can help.



Children usually go to sleep breathing anaesthetic gas through a soft mask, or by an injection through a small drip. Monitors are attached once asleep.

Fasting

It is very important that your child's stomach is empty to reduce the risk of stomach contents entering the lungs. You will be given exact times. As a guide, solid food and formula or cow's milk are usually stopped six hours before, breast milk four hours before and clear fluids one hour before. Follow the instructions given by the hospital, as these take priority.

02 Types of anaesthesia and alternatives

- **General anaesthesia** is needed for almost all neurosurgical operations and for many scans in young children.
- **Local anaesthetic and nerve blocks** are often added during the general anaesthetic to reduce pain afterwards.
- **Sedation**, a lighter sleep, may be used for some scans or minor procedures.
- **Premedication.** An anxious child may be offered a calming medicine beforehand.

03 What to expect on the day

- **Arrival.** The nurse checks your child's details, weight, temperature and fasting times, and fits an identity band.
- **Numbing cream** may be applied to the hands to make drip insertion painless.

- **Going to sleep.** Where the hospital allows, one parent may accompany their child into the anaesthetic room and stay until they are asleep. Your child may become floppy or restless as they fall asleep; this is normal.
- **During the operation** a breathing tube is placed once your child is asleep, and monitors, drips and warming are applied.
- **Waking up.** Your child wakes in the recovery room, and you will be called as soon as possible.

04 Risks and side effects

Modern anaesthesia for children is very safe. Serious problems are rare, and the anaesthetist is trained to recognise and treat them immediately. The anaesthetist will discuss any risks particular to your child.

Common

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- Nausea or vomiting.
- Sore throat or a hoarse voice from the breathing tube.
- Shivering, dizziness or feeling cold.
- **Emergence agitation**: crying, confusion or restlessness on waking, usually settling within 30 minutes.
- Pain or bruising at the drip site.

Less common

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- Breathing problems on waking, such as coughing or a spasm of the vocal cords, especially after a recent cold.
- Damage to teeth, lips or tongue.
- A minor allergic reaction or rash.
- Difficulty passing urine.

Rare but serious

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- Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).
- Breathing problems needing intensive care.
- Malignant hyperthermia, an inherited reaction to some anaesthetic drugs.
- Aspiration of stomach contents into the lungs.
- Brain damage or death. These are extremely rare in healthy children.

Anaesthesia and the developing brain. Parents sometimes ask about research into anaesthetic drugs in young children. Current evidence suggests that a single, short anaesthetic in early childhood does not cause lasting effects on learning or behaviour. Necessary surgery should not be delayed because of this concern.

05 After the anaesthetic: what is normal

- Sleepiness for the rest of the day.

- Clumsiness, so supervise your child closely.
- Mild nausea and a reduced appetite on the first day.
- Changes in sleep or behaviour for a few days, such as clinginess or nightmares.

06 Recovery at home

- Start with small drinks, then light food when your child feels ready.
- Give pain relief regularly as prescribed.
- An adult should stay with your child for the first 24 hours.
- Avoid bikes, climbing and swimming for 24 hours.

07 When to contact us

Please contact the rooms or the hospital if you notice:

- Noisy breathing, breathing difficulty or blue lips
- Your child is difficult to wake or unusually drowsy
- Persistent vomiting, or no drinking for many hours
- A rash, swelling of the face or itching
- A high fever
- Anything else that worries you

IN AN EMERGENCY

If your child is very drowsy, cannot be woken, is having a seizure that does not stop, or you are seriously worried, call an ambulance or go to the nearest emergency department immediately. Tell the staff about your child's operation and ask them to contact Professor Labuschagne. You know your child best: if something does not feel right, please call.

THE ROOMS · OFFICE HOURS

012 664 6026

Elective appointments and queries, office hours, for both Netcare Unitas Hospital and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital

AFTER HOURS

After hours, call the hospital switchboard and ask for Professor Labuschagne: Netcare Unitas Hospital 012 677 8000 · Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital 010 133 0600

Emergency services: Netcare 911 · 082 911 | National ambulance · 10177

NETCARE UNITAS HOSPITAL

Room 403, Netcare Unitas Hospital
866 Clifton Avenue, Lyttelton, Centurion

NELSON MANDELA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Private Suites, First Floor
6 Jubilee Road, Parktown North, Johannesburg

08 Acknowledgement

This leaflet is provided with Professor Labuschagne's surgical consent. Consent for the anaesthetic itself is obtained by the anaesthetist. By signing below, you confirm that you have received and read this information.

Questions I have discussed

Please write down any questions you asked and any particular concerns that were discussed.

My acknowledgement

Please tick each statement.

- ☐ I have read this leaflet about my child's anaesthetic.
- ☐ I understand that the anaesthetist will discuss the anaesthetic plan, its risks and alternatives with me and obtain consent separately.
- ☐ I have told the team about my child's medical history, medicines, allergies, any previous problems with anaesthesia in my child or family, and any recent illness.
- ☐ I understand and will follow the fasting instructions I have been given.

PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Full name _____ Relationship to child _____

Signature _____ Date and time _____

SURGEON'S STATEMENT

I have provided this information leaflet to the parent or guardian, and the anaesthetist has been informed of the planned procedure.

Surgeon Professor Jason John Labuschagne HPCSA no. MP 0530077

Signature _____ Date and time _____

INTERPRETER (IF USED)

I have accurately interpreted the contents of this document and the discussion between the doctor and the parent or guardian.

Full name _____ Language _____

Signature _____ Date _____

WITNESS

Full name _____ Capacity _____

Signature _____ Date _____

A copy of this signed document will be kept in the medical record and a copy offered to the parent or guardian. Personal information is processed in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013. · Professor Jason John Labuschagne · HPCSA MP 0530077 · Version 1.0 · October 2026