

Having oral surgery under general anaesthetic

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to explain what to expect when you have oral surgery under general anaesthetic. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us, using the details on page 7.

Where will my oral surgery happen?

Your oral surgery procedure will be carried out in the Charing Cross Hospital theatres under general anaesthesia (GA). This means you will be 'asleep' during the procedure.

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

Many types of oral surgery can be completed under local anaesthetic, meaning you will be awake during the procedure. Please speak to your healthcare professional about this.

What complications can occur?

All surgical procedures have risks. Some risks which are specific to this type of surgery include:

- **dry socket** – this occurs in about five to ten in 100 patients and is due to a breakdown in the wound healing process. It normally occurs two to four days after the operation. Pain will start to become worse and constant. It is more common if you smoke or if you are having lower teeth removed
- **infection** – this occurs in less than one in 100 patients and can present as pain, swelling and bad taste. It may occur three to seven days after the operation. We do not routinely give antibiotics after the removal of a tooth or teeth, as the risk of infection is low. However, less than one in 100 patients (0.5%) might need an overnight stay in hospital with intravenous antibiotics due to a severe postoperative infection
- **sinus problems** – upper molar teeth can sit close to the air sinus. The air sinus is a hollow cavity in the top jaw. When upper teeth are removed there is a very small risk that the air sinus can become punctured. If this occurs further surgery is sometimes required to repair it. Only a very small number of patients experience this complication

- **damage to adjacent teeth** – when an adjacent tooth has a large filling or crown on it, it is possible that this can be dislodged during surgery. If this happens you will need to see your dentist for further treatment

What are the risks of having surgery under general anaesthesia?

Any operation may lead to problems including the following general risks:

- blood clots in the legs and lungs
- allergic reaction to drugs or anaesthetic
- breathing difficulties during or following the general anaesthetic

Complications are more likely in patients who are overweight or obese or are heavy smokers. There is also a greater risk for people with medical problems such as diabetes or chronic lung conditions that are not well controlled.

Will I need a pre-assessment appointment?

If you are having oral surgery under general anaesthetic, your healthcare professional will put you on the waiting list for surgery.

1. You'll be sent a pre-assessment questionnaire by email and text. So, it's important to let the reception team know if your contact details have changed.
2. You complete and return the questionnaire.
3. The nursing team will review your responses.

We might ask you to come to hospital for a pre-assessment appointment. This could be a specific investigation or test before your surgery. We might ask you to:

- see the anaesthetist
- have tests to see if you carry specific bacteria, such as MRSA
- have blood tests
- have specific tests such as an ECG or an x-ray

If you need to come to hospital, we will explain why and give you information about how to prepare for your pre-assessment appointment.

How do I get to the hospital?

Charing Cross Hospital has a small number of general and disabled car parking spaces. So, when possible, we encourage you to use public transport to travel to hospital.

The nearest underground stations are:

- Barons Court – District and Piccadilly lines
- Hammersmith – Circle, Hammersmith & City, District, and Piccadilly lines

Both are about half a mile or a 10-minute walk from Charing Cross Hospital.

Buses that stop directly outside Charing Cross Hospital: 190, 211, 220, 295, N11 and N97.

Taxis

Hammersmith station operates a taxi rank; but we always recommend you pre-book a taxi before you travel. You can request a taxi at the hospital's main reception on the ground floor. This is near the main entrance. You can speak to the front-of-house team during working hours. These are 7.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm weekends and bank holidays.

At other times, use the telephone on the shelf at main reception.

How do I prepare for my surgery admission?

Check your admissions letter for your treatment date and arrival time. You should arrive on the ward on this date and at this time.

Let us know if you feel unwell before your planned admission. For example, if you have flu, sickness or diarrhoea. Please contact your medical team for advice before you come into hospital.

For morning surgery – **do not eat after 02.00am**. You can drink water, black tea or black coffee until 06:00. Do not add milk.

For afternoon surgery – **do not eat after 06.00am**. You can drink water, black tea or black coffee until 10:00. Do not add milk.

What should I wear and bring with me?

- do not wear any make up, nail varnish or jewellery. These can make it difficult for us to monitor you properly
- wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes and bring a dressing gown and suitable footwear
- do not bring valuable items or large amounts of money with you. The hospital cannot accept any responsibility if they get lost

Could my surgery be cancelled?

Sometimes your surgery may have to be cancelled on the day. This is due to high demand for beds and unexpected delays. If this does happen, please accept our apologies in advance. We will always rebook your appointment at the earliest opportunity.

Who will I see on the day?

When you arrive, you will undergo some pre-admission checks, including:

- nurse review – to check blood pressure, any necessary results
- anaesthetic review – to make sure you are fit for surgery
- dentist review – to make sure you have consented to the procedure

We will give you verbal and written instructions explaining how to look after yourself after the procedure, including pain relief.

What happens before I go into theatre?

- you will be asked to change into a hospital gown before you go to the operating theatre
- you may be asked to remove any dentures, spectacles or contact lenses just before you go to theatre. Please bring containers for storing these items
- **please expect a wait before your operation.** Your admission time is not your operation time. At the time of surgery, you will be escorted to the theatre

How long will the surgery take?

Some teeth are very simple to remove and may take only a few minutes. This is a simple extraction. Others can be more complex and take up to 30 to 40 minutes to remove.

For more complex teeth, this may involve a cut into the gum to expose the tooth. The surgeon may then use a dental drill to remove bone from around the tooth to loosen it from the jaw.

They may then section the tooth into smaller pieces; this makes it easier to remove the tooth. Once the tooth or teeth have been removed, the gum is put back together with dissolvable stitches.

Your surgeon will discuss how simple or complex the surgery will be for you.

What happens after the surgery?

You will wake up in the recovery area with a nurse looking after you. When you are fully awake, we will take you back to the ward.

You may find that you have a sore or dry throat and some tenderness at the site of the operation. We will give you painkillers if you need them.

We will ask you to stay on the ward for a few hours to make sure that you have recovered sufficiently from the anaesthetic before you go home.

You will be able to go home later the same day, if:

- you are feeling comfortable
- you have managed to eat and drink
- there are no complications

But you must be collected and have someone to stay with you overnight.

If you need a review appointment, the surgical team will arrange this. They will send you the details of the appointment.

What to expect and do in the first 24 hours?

- do not explore the tooth extraction site with your tongue or fingers
- swelling and bruising can happen inside and outside the mouth
- you will be numb for a few hours after surgery so avoid hot drinks which may burn your mouth or hard foods for the next 24 hours. Be careful not to bite your lip or cheek
- you might want to take pain relief medication while you're still numb so that the pain relief is effective once the numbness wears off
- it is best to have soft food, for example cooled pasta or soup for at least two days
- avoid spitting or rinsing for 24 hours after the tooth extraction. This may wash away the blood clot and cause more bleeding and pain (dry socket)
- avoid cleaning teeth on the day of the extraction but begin again the following day with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste as usual. Take care around the extraction site
- you should not work, operate any machinery, drive a car or sign any legal documents for 24 hours after you return home. This is because you've had a general anaesthetic
- you might occasionally feel nauseous or sick after the general anaesthetic. This is quite normal, and you should rest or go to bed

What to expect and do in the first 72 hours?

- **avoid** alcohol, smoking and strenuous exercise

- after 24 hours, gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water)
- you may have trouble opening your mouth and pain or stiffness of your jaw. This will ease after 72 hours but can last longer
- you may experience bad breath; this is unlikely to last more than a week
- you will have a small hole or depression in the gum where the tooth was extracted. This can take up to two months to close over
- pain is common for the first 48 to 72 hours, and your mouth can be sore for up to two weeks
- do not exercise for two to three days after the appointment

What should I avoid?

- **do not smoke** on the day of the procedure and for 1 week after. Smoking may delay healing. For information and support on quitting smoking see: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/
- **do not** run or cycle to and from your appointment as this will increase your blood pressure and possibly cause the surgical site to bleed



How do I control pain?

We'll tell you about the right pain relief for you. This depends on your medical history, so please confirm your medical history details with us at every appointment

Follow the instructions on the packet; do not exceed the maximum dose of any pain relief medication. Contact your dentist, GP or pharmacist for clarification or alternatives.

Will I need time off work?

It is usually best to take the day off and possibly allow two to three days after general anaesthetic. Occasionally recovery could be up to a week.

Will there be much bleeding?

- it is normal to have a little oozing from the socket and for your saliva to be pink or red

- if bleeding restarts later, use one of the bite-packs. Dampen it with tap water and bite down or apply pressure on the socket where the tooth was removed. Do this for 15 minutes while seated and repeat as needed
- if you do not have a bite-pack, use a clean towel to bite down on or to apply pressure
- if bleeding does not stop, please contact NHS 111 (NHS out of hours helpline) or Accident & Emergency



Will my stitches need removing?

Do not worry about the stitches. They will dissolve by themselves in about 7 to 14 days.

How do I take my antibiotics?

If we gave you antibiotics, follow the instructions and complete the course.

If you get a reaction to the antibiotics, for example, a rash, stop taking the antibiotics. Contact the hospital, GP or NHS 111 for further advice, or go to local A&E.

What is a dry socket?

- dry socket is delayed healing of a socket, where the tooth was removed. This is due to the early breakdown of the blood clot. It normally happens a few days after the extraction. It can cause a dull pain that is not helped by painkillers
- your dentist can treat dry socket with a dressing, or you can contact us

Hours and contact information

Monday to Thursday: 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday: 8.30am to 3.00pm

Phone number: 020 3313 0403

Oral surgery clinics are open on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Restorative dentistry clinics are open on Wednesday and Thursday.

How do I give feedback about my visit?

We want to hear your **suggestions** or **comments**. Your feedback helps us provide the best service. You can always speak to a member of staff.

You can also contact the **patient advice and liaison service (PALS)** on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays) or email at imperial.pals@nhs.net. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or questions and they can help solve problems.

You can make a complaint by ringing **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or emailing ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net. The address is Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

Other ways to read this leaflet

Please email us at imperial.communications@nhs.net if you need this leaflet in a different format. This could be large print, Easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in a different language.

Restorative dentistry and oral surgery
Published: December 2025
Review date: December 2028
Reference no: 5342
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