THE ANESTHESIA EXPERIENCE

A PATIENT GUIDE FOR ANESTHESIA QUESTIONS
Who are anesthesiologists?

Your anesthesiologist is your advocate in the operating room.

Anesthesiologists are critical members of your surgical team as they have the responsibility of monitoring your welfare when you undergo anesthesia. Your anesthesiologist's primary goal is to ensure your comfort and safety during surgery and to make informed medical judgments to protect you, such as treating and regulating changes in breathing, heart rate and blood pressure as they are affected by the surgery being performed.

What's the difference between a doctor and an anesthesiologist?

Anesthesiologists are medical doctors who specialize in anesthesiology, which is the use of pain-blocking techniques or medications (anesthetics) used during your surgery/medical procedures.

A member of your anesthesia team will be with you throughout the procedure. The anesthesiologist's role in the operating room is simple: to ensure your comfort during surgery as well as make informed medical judgments to protect you. These include changes in your life functions such as breathing, heart rate and blood pressure, which are all affected by the surgery being performed. Your anesthesiologist immediately diagnoses and treats any medical problems that might arise during your surgery or recovery period. In addition, your anesthesiologist will manage any chronic medical conditions that may need special attention during your procedure and immediately afterward. The role of an anesthesiologist extends beyond the operating and recovery room. Anesthesiologists also work in intensive care units to help restore critically ill patients to stable condition.

Anesthesiologists can be board-certified through the Board of Anesthesiology, which is recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

Where do anesthesiologists work?

Anesthesiologists provide care in operating rooms for surgery as well as in many procedure sites throughout the hospital. They are able to provide sedation and supportive care during almost any procedure.

If you know what to expect, you will be better prepared and more relaxed for your surgery and anesthesia.
Prefering for Surgery

May I choose my anesthesiologist for my surgery?

Of course you can. You usually have a choice as to whom your anesthesiologist will be. Your surgeon may refer you to an anesthesiologist or you may select one based on a personal recommendation or based on personal experience. Feel free to contact the anesthesia office with any additional questions.

Is it important to sit down with my anesthesiologist before surgery?

Absolutely. Anesthesia and surgery affect your entire body. Therefore, it is important for your anesthesiologist to know as much about you as possible. During the pre-operative interview, your anesthesiologist will carefully evaluate you and your medical history – as well as inquire about any recent medications. During this discussion, your anesthesiologist will most likely touch on the following points:
• The procedures associated with your surgery
• Your anesthetic choices (including their risks and benefits)
• Any tests that may be needed
• What medications might be prescribed for you

If you do not meet your anesthesiologist during a pre-operation interview, you will meet him or her immediately before your surgery. At this point, your anesthesiologist will review your medical chart for a clear understanding of your needs and medical condition.

What are the different types of anesthesia?

There are three main categories of anesthesia: local, regional and general.
• Local anesthesia numbs a small part of the body.
  You get a shot of local anesthetic directly into the surgical area to block pain. It is used only for minor procedures. You may stay awake during the procedure, or you may get medicine to help you relax or sleep.
• Regional anesthesia blocks pain to a larger part of your body.
  Anesthetic is injected around major nerves or the spinal cord. Like with local anesthesia, you may also get medicine to help you relax or sleep when receiving regional anesthesia.
• General anesthesia affects the brain as well as the entire body.
  You may get it through a vein (intravenously), or you may breathe it in. With general anesthesia, you are completely unaware and do not feel pain during the surgery. General anesthesia also often causes you to forget the surgery and the time immediately following surgery.

Your anesthesiologist and surgeon will collaboratively determine what type of anesthesia will be best for you during your surgery. The type of anesthesia used for any given operation will depend on many factors and will be discussed with you prior to your surgery.
During your Surgery
What does my anesthesiologist do during the surgery?
Your anesthesiologist is responsible for your comfort and care before, during and after your surgery. In the operating room, he or she will direct your anesthesia and manage your vital functions (heart rate, blood pressure, heart rhythm, body temperature and breathing). The anesthesiologist is also responsible for fluid and blood replacement, when necessary.

On some occasions, people requiring surgery may have other medical conditions such as diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure or asthma. Rest assured that your anesthesiologist is acutely aware of your conditions and well-prepared to treat them during your surgery and immediately afterward. As doctors, anesthesiologists are uniquely qualified to treat not only sudden medical problems related to surgery, but also your chronic conditions that may need special attention during your procedure.

After your Surgery
Is the anesthesiologist’s job done after the surgery?
Your anesthesiologist continues to be responsible for your care in the recovery room. The anesthesiologist will direct the specially trained staff that is monitoring your condition and vital signs as the anesthesia wears off. The anesthesiologist decides when you are able to leave the recovery room. Your anesthesiologist may participate in management of pain following surgery. The anesthesiologist may prescribe intravenous or oral medications, perform nerve blocks to numb the site of surgery and visit with you to ensure your pain is well managed in the hospital.

Will I receive a separate bill from the anesthesiologist?
Your anesthesiologist is a specialist (like your internist or surgeon) and you probably will receive a bill for his or her services as you would from your other physicians. If you have any financial concerns, your anesthesiologist or a member of the staff will answer your questions. Please note that your hospital may charge separately for the medications and equipment used for your anesthetic. You can also contact your health insurance to inquire about your coverage.

Anything else I should know or do?
If you are well-informed and know what to expect, you will be better prepared and more relaxed for your surgery and anesthesia. Be sure to ask questions and discuss any concerns you might have with your anesthesiologist about your upcoming anesthetic care.

Your anesthesiologist’s primary goal is to ensure your comfort and safety during surgery.
About North American Partners in Anesthesia

Founded in 1986, North American Partners in Anesthesia (NAPA) is the leading single specialty anesthesia management company in the United States. NAPA is comprised of the most respected clinical staff, providing thousands of patients with superior and attentive care. The company is known for partnering with hospitals and other health care facilities across the nation to provide anesthesia services and perioperative leadership that maximize operating room performance, enhance revenue, and demonstrate consistent patient and surgeon satisfaction ratings.

Contact NAPA
Email CustomerService@NAPAanesthesia.com
Call 1.888.240.1793
Fax 516.945.3137

Mailing Address:
North American Partners in Anesthesia
68 South Service Road, Suite 350
Melville, NY 11747

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