THE ANESTHESIA EXPERIENCE
A PARENTAL GUIDE FOR PEDIATRIC ANESTHESIA
What if your child needs surgery that requires anesthesia?

If your child needs to have an operation, you probably have plenty of questions — including some about anesthesia. That’s where your doctor and your anesthesiologist come in. They can answer ALL your questions and assure you — as well as your child — that the procedure will go smoothly. It is important for you to be a strong support system for your child. The more prepared, calm, and reassuring you are about the surgery and the anesthesia, the easier the experience will probably be for both parent and child.
Should I talk to my child about anesthesia?

Absolutely. Explain that the anesthesia will prevent your child from feeling pain during the procedure. Be sure to avoid frightening language. For example, steer away from saying, “you’ll be given gas” or “you’ll be put to sleep.” A child may confuse “gas” with the fuel that can poison or kill, or confuse “put to sleep” with what happened to the family pet. Also avoid saying, “you’ll be taking a nap.” Young kids may think all future naps mean surgery. Feel free to ask your anesthesiologist what other tips they can share to help you and your child.

In addition, let your child know where you’ll be during the whole experience. Reassure your child that you’ll be in the waiting room nearby during the surgery and in the recovery room when they wake up after the surgery. You may also have the option to be able to sit with your child until he or she falls asleep before the surgery. Discuss this with your anesthesiologist prior to your child’s surgery.

As you talk to your child about the hospital and surgery, remember to stay calm. As hard as it may seem, try not to cry in front of your child. If you need a few minutes to compose yourself, go into another room. Your tone, facial expressions and body language can sometimes send an unintentional message to your child. If they sense you are scared or feel confused, they will feel that way too.
What if my child is afraid?

Common fears of young children include the possibility of separation or abandonment from parents as well as the possibility of pain. Assure your child that not only will you be there when he or she wakes up, but a favorite toy can come along as well. Be sure to tell your child that if anything feels sore right after the operation, a doctor or nurse can give medication that will make it feel better.

Older children (pre-teens or teens) may worry about “loss of control,” in which they fear they may say or do something embarrassing. They can be reassured that they will not talk or move inappropriately while under anesthesia.

May I choose my child’s anesthesiologist?

A qualified anesthesiologist will be assigned to take care of your child. If you or your surgeon recommends a specific anesthesiologist, every attempt will be made to assign that anesthesiologist to your child’s surgery. Your choice of an anesthesiologist will be determined in advance of any surgery.
Is it important to sit down with the anesthesiologist before surgery?
Absolutely. Since your anesthesiologist is responsible for the comfort, safety and medical care of your child during surgery, it is important that you meet before entering the operating room.

Anesthesia and surgery affect the entire body. Therefore, it is important for the anesthesiologist to know as much about your child as possible. During the pre-operative interview, your anesthesiologist will carefully evaluate your child’s medical history – as well as inquire about any recent medications.

During this talk, your child’s anesthesiologist will most likely touch on these points:
• The procedures associated with your child’s surgery
• Your anesthetic choices for your child (including their risks and benefits)
• Any tests that may be needed
• What medications might be prescribed for your child

If you do not meet your child’s anesthesiologist during a pre-operation interview, you will meet them immediately before your child’s surgery. At this point, he or she will review the medical chart for a clear understanding of your child’s needs and medical condition in order to conclude the best anesthetic options for your child.

What type of anesthesia will my child receive?
Your anesthesiologist and surgeon will collaboratively determine what type of anesthesia is best for your child. These options will be discussed prior to the surgery with you and your child.

Will I receive a separate bill from the anesthesiologist?
The anesthesiologist is a specialist (like an internist or surgeon) and you will most likely 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 their staff will answer your questions. Please note that your hospital will charge separately for the medications and equipment used for your child’s anesthetic. You can also contact your health insurance to inquire about your coverage.
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.