

Risks Associated with your anaesthetic: feeling sick

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Feeling sick

An unpleasant sensation, usually in the stomach is described as nausea or 'feeling sick'. The act of forcefully emptying the stomach is described as vomiting or 'throwing up'.

Will I feel sick after my operation?

Overall, about a sixth (1 in 6) of people will experience a feeling of sickness after an operation. But it depends on several factors as explained below.

Why do some people feel sick after an operation?

There are a number of factors that affect how likely you are to feel sick after a surgery.

Type of operation - Some operations are more likely to cause sickness than others, for example:

- Operations in the abdomen or genital area
- Gynaecological procedures
- Ear, nose and throat operations, e.g. removal of tonsils
- Surgery to correct squint of the eye
- Very long operations.

Notes

For further advice, please telephone:

**Anaesthetic Preoperative Clinics
01744 646395**

Drugs used - Some drugs like anaesthetic drugs, including some anaesthetic gases, and morphine like pain killers are more likely to cause sickness than others.

You - Some people are more likely than others to suffer sickness. These include:

- Children
- Women
- Anyone who suffers from travel sickness
- Anyone who already has suffered from sickness after surgery.

Other reasons -

- Being without food and water before and after your operation
- Being very anxious
- Travelling shortly after receiving a general anaesthetic. If you are going home the same day, you may find that you feel sick or vomit during the journey
- Your anaesthetic can be tailored to reduce the chances of a recurrence
- You may be less likely to suffer. For example, the possibility of experiencing sickness after surgery lessens as you grow older.

How long does the feeling of sickness last?

Usually it is short lived or stops after treatment.

Uncommonly, it may last for more than a day.

Can feeling sick after the operation harm me?

- It can be distressing and unpleasant.
- It can make your pain worse.
- It can delay you eating and drinking. This may keep you in hospital longer.
- Rarely, if vomiting is severe, it can damage operation site, lungs and the gullet.

Can anything be done to prevent me from feeling sick after my operation?

Yes. Although the risk of sickness can never totally be removed, your anaesthetist can change your anaesthetic in order to reduce your chances of suffering sickness.

- You may be able to have your operation under a regional anaesthetic rather than general anaesthetic, as this may reduce chances of being sick

- You may be given one or more anti-sickness drugs as part of your anaesthetic
- Your anaesthetist may select the drugs that do not cause sickness
- You may receive fluids through an intravenous cannula (drip). This has been shown to help prevent sickness.

Is there any treatment available if I feel sick after my operation?

Yes, the methods used to prevent you feeling sick can also be used to treat it. For example, you could be given anti-sickness drugs and intravenous fluids.

Can I do anything to avoid feeling sick?

Yes. After your surgery:

- Avoid sitting up or getting out of bed too quickly
- Avoid drinking and eating immediately after your operation.
- Good pain relief is important. Although some pain relieving drugs may make you feel sick, severe pain will too.
- Taking slow deep breaths can also help to reduce the feeling of sickness.