

What we do

The Department of Pediatric Anesthesia cares for children of all ages with many different medical conditions. Our team of anesthesiologists (medical doctors) provides sedation and anesthesia for a wide range of surgical and diagnostic procedures. We are also experts in pain management and critical care.

We provide this care in a variety of locations throughout the hospital and across the city, including the operating room, the Radiology Department, the Burn Unit, the Intensive Care Unit and the BC Cancer.

Our goal is to give your child a safe and comfortable anesthetic. All of our anesthesiologists have special training in anesthesia for children. They work together with anesthesia assistants and nurses to keep your child safe and comfortable during your child's surgery or procedure.

About anesthesia

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia or deep sedation is a special state of sleep that prevents feeling (sensation) and memory during the surgery or procedure. The medication works by slowing down the nerve cells in the brain. The anesthetic is stopped when the procedure is done, allowing your child to wake up.

Anesthesia can be given in several ways. It can be given into an intravenous (IV) tube placed in a vein usually in your child's hand. We place the IV after the skin has been numbed with a special cream, and while we distract your child. Once we give the medicine, your child will fall asleep very quickly.

Anesthesia can also be given as a gas through a clear plastic mask. The gas does not hurt but has a different smell. The anesthesiologist will discuss with you which anesthetic will be best for your child.

After your child is asleep, the anesthesiologist may also consider injecting local anesthetic (or "freezing") near the area of your child's surgery. We do this to help your child be comfortable when they wake up. We will discuss these options with you before your child goes into the operating room.

What is an anesthesiologist?

An anesthesiologist, sometimes also referred to as an anesthetist, is a type of specialized medical doctor. After graduating from medical school, the training lasts for at least another five years.

Pediatric anesthesiologists receive extra training to help take care of the smallest and most complicated children.

Is anesthesia safe?

This is a very common question, and probably stems from a time (40+ years ago) when undergoing anesthesia and surgery was much riskier than it is now. **Modern anesthesia is very safe thanks to better technology and research.** Allergies to anesthesia are extremely rare, and our rates of complications are very low.

There have been recent studies which have questioned how anesthesia affects a child's brain growth. While many studies are still ongoing, the current data available reassuringly show no effect on a child's development from a single anesthetic at a young age. More information on this subject is available here: <https://smarttots.org/faq-for-parents/>

There are some minor side effects your child may have after an anesthetic, including sore throat, dizziness, or drowsiness.

Your child's anesthesiologist will be happy to discuss any questions you have. Please ask!

How can you help?

It is important to talk to your child about going to the hospital and about the procedure (surgery).

- If your child is less than four years old, talk to them two to three days before the procedure. Talk to them again on the morning of the procedure.
- If your child is over four years old, begin talking with them about the procedure a few weeks beforehand.

Children who are well prepared for their procedure will have less anxiety & distress, and will recover better after their procedure. If your child has a particular fear, it will be helpful to tell us that concern when you arrive so we can address it with your child.

Follow the instructions you receive, especially about what your child can eat or drink before the procedure. If you cannot remember the instructions please call the **Pre-Anesthesia Clinic at 604-875-3912** for assistance.

For more information on how to speak with and prepare your child, please go to <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/hospital-services/surgery>

The Child Life Dept. at BCCH has excellent resources on preparing your child for their visit to BCCH. Their website is <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/supportservices/child-life#Procedural--prep>

For further information please visit our webpage at <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/ourservices/hospital-services/anesthesia>