

AFTER GENERAL ANESTHESIA

Modern anesthesia is a mixture of several different medications. Although patients “wake up” faster, and have less “nausea” than years passed, general anesthesia agents can stay in your body for up to 24 hours. It is important to remember:

1. Advance your diet gradually. Do not eat anything fried, greasy, or heavy, today. If you do experience nausea, go back to clear liquids. Treat yourself as if you had the stomach flu. Nausea and vomiting after 24 hours is probably NOT related to your anesthesia. It is more important to drink plenty of fluids for the next few days than to eat. Most general anesthesia medications are excreted from your body by your kidneys.
2. Do not drive today, or operate heavy equipment. Do not trust your judgment on stairs without using handrails. It is suggested that a responsible adult stay with you today. Do not drive while taking pain medications. While anesthesia is still in your body, pain medicine may act stronger, so be careful. Even though you usually take “2” pain pills, “1” may be enough for today.
3. You may experience a sore, scratchy throat if you have had a small breathing tube in place during your operation. Taking ice chips, throat lozenges, or gargling with warm saltwater will help reduce this discomfort. It will last only a few days.
4. Because your lungs also go to sleep during general anesthesia it’s important to do the cough and deep breathing exercises instructed by your nurse. This will keep your lungs clear and functioning properly. This is especially important if you are a smoker.
5. Activity and lifting, and instructions regarding your surgical procedure, should be advanced according to your surgeon’s discharge instruction.