

ANAESTHESIA FOR CATARACT SURGERY AND OTHER EYE OPERATIONS

This patient advisory is intended to provide you with general information. It is not a substitute for advice from your anaesthetist. You are encouraged to discuss the benefits and risks of anaesthesia with your anaesthetist. This leaflet is an abridged version of the ASA patient education pamphlet: Anaesthesia for Cataract Surgery and Other Eye Operations – a guide for patients. The complete pamphlet may be requested from your anaesthetist.

Cataracts and eye surgery

Clouding within the lens of the eye or its capsule is called a cataract. Cataracts occur mostly in older people.

Surgical removal of a cataract is usually performed under local anaesthesia. Anaesthetists also use local anaesthetic injections during surgery for glaucoma, retinal detachment or corneal grafts. Millions of cataract and other eye operations have been performed under local anaesthesia in Australia.

Cataract surgery may, on occasions, also be performed under general anaesthesia.

Before the anaesthetic

Your anaesthetist will ask you about your complete medical history and will discuss which anaesthetic technique is best for you.

Procedure of local anaesthesia

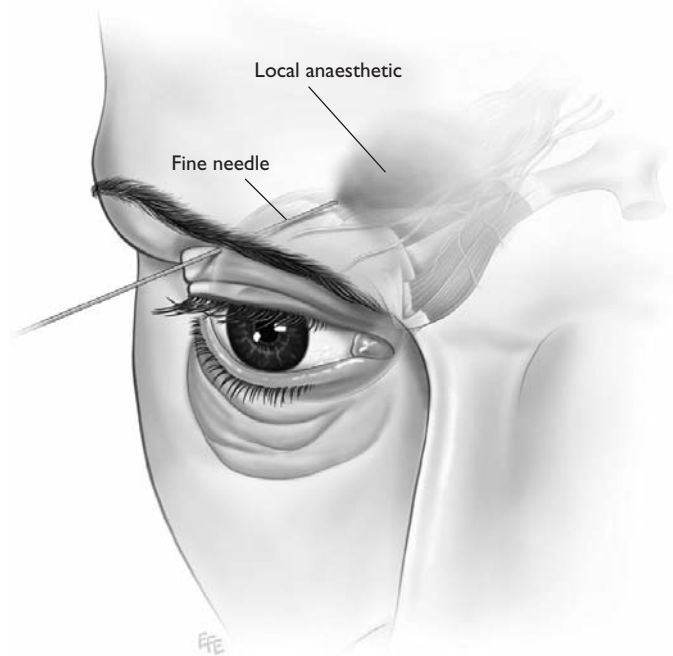
Common techniques include the following.

1. Topical local anaesthetic drops: Local anaesthetic gel or drops are applied to the eye's surface before and during the operation. The surgeon may inject local anaesthetic around the eye or the treated area.
2. Injection of local anaesthetic around or behind the eye, which is done before surgery. This provides greater anaesthesia. A very thin needle is used.

During the operation, you have to lie still and avoid motion of the head. The anaesthetist may administer an oral or intravenous sedative before or during the surgery to keep you comfortable and reduce any anxiety.

During the surgery

Your anaesthetist will monitor your heartbeat, blood pressure and breathing. The eye surgeon will cover your face with a drape, leaving only the eye exposed. The anaesthetist will ensure that you have plenty of fresh air and space for breathing while your face is covered.



Recovery after surgery

After surgery, you are transferred to a recovery area. Your anaesthetist will prescribe pain relief. When you have had something to eat and drink, and are feeling sufficiently recovered, you may go home.

A friend or family member should accompany you and stay with you for at least a day.

While most patients go home the same day, other patients may have to stay in hospital overnight.

Possible risks and complications

Modern anaesthesia is safe but does have risks of side effects and complications.

Although uncommon, complications are possible. These are more fully outlined in the complete ASA patient education pamphlet and should be discussed with your anaesthetist.

Costs

You will receive an account from your anaesthetist for professional services.

You should request advice about these fees so you are aware of rebates from Medicare and your private health insurance fund, as well as any out-of-pocket expenses. It is better to discuss fees before treatment rather than afterwards. ©