

Anesthesia safe for kids, doctors' group says

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(HealthDay)—Anesthesia eases the pain of millions of children who must have surgery every year, but parents who are worried about the safety of these medications should talk to their anesthesiologist about

their fears, experts advise.

"Particularly in infants and toddlers, surgery is only recommended when necessary for the child's [health](#), so parents should not avoid an important procedure out of fear," said Dr. Randall Flick. He is chair of the Committee on Pediatric Anesthesia at the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA).

"Physician anesthesiologists have completed years of special training to ensure safe, high-quality care, which should set parents' minds at ease," said Flick, who is also associate professor of pediatrics and anesthesiology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

There are many important details about children's health that anesthesiologists should know before surgery, the ASA added in a news release. The group recommends that parents ask the following seven questions before any type of surgery:

- **How can I ensure my child's surgery is successful?**
Parents should always provide the anesthesiologist with their child's detailed [medical](#) history. The doctor should know if children have any allergies or asthma. Anesthesiologists should also know if children have ever had a bad reaction to anesthesia.
- **Should my child's medications be stopped before surgery?**
Before surgery, the anesthesiologist must receive a detailed list of children's medications. This list should include over-the-counter pain medications and vitamins. It's important to ask the doctor if these medications should be stopped before surgery and for how long. The answers to these questions will depend on each [child's](#) health and the specific procedure being done.
- **Can my child eat or drink before surgery?**
Children usually need to stop eating solid foods six to eight hours before surgery. In some cases, sipping clear liquids, such as

water, may be allowed up to two hours before surgery, and breast milk may be given up to four hours before surgery.

- **How can I help prepare my child for surgery?**

Parents can help children feel better by explaining that their surgery will help fix a problem and help them get better. They should also know that it won't hurt and they won't even remember what happened. Children should also understand that their [parents](#) will be nearby, but their doctors and nurses are also there to take care of them.

- **Is anesthesia safe for my child?**

Overall, anesthesia is very safe. The risks associated with these medications depend on a number of variables, such as the complexity of children's health issues, their age and how urgent their surgery is. The long-term effects of anesthesia on infants and toddlers are still under investigation.

- **Will my child be in pain after surgery?**

Children will be prescribed medication to ease pain after surgery. They are safe if they are taken as directed. An anesthesiologist can also help ease children's nausea following surgery.

- **What type of anesthesia will my child receive?**

There are many different types of anesthesia. Some are given through an IV and others are inhaled through a mask. The type of [anesthesia children](#) receive will be determined by their [anesthesiologist](#) based on their health and the type of [surgery](#) they are having.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [children and anesthesia](#).

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