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Welcome to Theatre

County Hospital Louth
Telephone: 01507 600100 extension 1240

www.ulh.nhs.uk

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If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

Welcome

Louth has two operating theatres and two anaesthetic rooms within the theatre suite. It is staffed by a theatre team, which consists of trained nursing staff, operating department practitioners and health care support workers/health care assistants (health care assistants are support workers that have received additional training).

We also have two Acute Care Practitioners in Orthopaedics (ACPs), Jody and Alison, one of whom will see you on the ward, with the surgeon, on the morning of your surgery.

On the day of your operation you will be brought to theatre by a member of the ward team and met at theatre reception by a member of the theatre team.

You will be asked some questions and your consent form will be checked with you. If appropriate, a check will be made to ensure your surgeon has marked your intended operation site. You will then be left to change into a theatre gown before being escorted into the anaesthetic room.

Please remember to bring your dressing gown and slippers with you to theatre.

Most patients choose to walk to theatre but do not worry if walking is a problem for you, as wheelchairs and trolleys are available.

The Anaesthetic room

There are usually four members of the team in the anaesthetic room, the anaesthetist, a PAA (members of the team who have undertaken additional training to allow them to administer anaesthesia), an ODP (operating department practitioner) and a health care support worker. Once in the anaesthetic room, you will be helped on to a trolley and have several pieces of routine monitoring equipment attached.

Contact information

Should you have any issues you need to discuss before your admission to hospital you can telephone the theatre and we can help you with your query.

The telephone number is: 01507 600100 extension1240.

Authors:

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Lin Judd: Operating Department Practitioner

Do I have to remove underwear?

You do not have to remove your pants. You should be aware, if your surgery involves removing them, we will do that in theatre and return them to you in the recovery room. If your procedure does not necessitate removal, be aware they may be splashed with skin cleaning fluid during your operation, so don't come in your best pants!

We do ask ladies to remove their bras for some operations. This will be confirmed on the day.

Can someone accompany me to theatre?

Yes, you can be accompanied into theatre. Your escort will be asked to leave before you enter theatre.

Will someone tell me what is happening?

You will have a member of the theatre team with you at all times regardless of the type of anaesthetic you have received. You will be informed at each stage of the procedure about what is happening. If you are awake, someone will be with you to hold your hand if you need it.

Will I be sick or have pain afterwards?

You will be given drugs for pain and sickness before your general anaesthetic, however, if you do still feel sick or have any pain, further drugs can be given to prevent this. We endeavour not to let anyone have pain or sickness following surgery.

These include three stickers on your chest, to which leads are attached, to give a tracing of your heart, a blood pressure cuff on your arm and a clip on your finger that measures oxygen levels in your body.

Additional monitoring of an adhesive strip which attaches to your forehead, this measures your level of consciousness to enable us to monitor the amount of anaesthesia you require. All of this monitoring will be removed prior to your return to the ward.

You will also need a small cannula (needle) in the back of your hand through which the anaesthetic drugs will be administered. If you have a fear of needles then please tell the nurse on your ward when you arrive at the hospital. Some cream can be applied to the back of your hand, at this stage, that will numb your hand so you can not feel the needle going in. This needs to be done 30 minutes before you come to theatre for it to work effectively.

Once the monitoring equipment has been applied and the cannula is in your hand you will be given your anaesthetic drugs which will include a painkiller, an anti sickness drug and the drug that will send you to sleep. You will also be given some oxygen to breathe via a facemask.

Occasionally, it is necessary to shave your operation site in theatre whilst you are asleep. You will be told about this in the anaesthetic room.

Types of anaesthetics

There are various types of anaesthetics you may be offered depending on the type of surgery you are to have. Your surgeon and the anaesthetist will discuss these with you. Here are some examples:

General anaesthesia - for this you will be given a combination of drugs, that will anaesthetise you. Once your operation is finished you will be given another drug that wakes you up.

After a general anaesthetic, you will wake up in the recovery room, where you will be monitored until you are awake from your anaesthetic, usually about 30 minutes. You will be given oxygen via a face mask, have your blood pressure recorded and a clip on your finger that monitors your oxygen levels. Once you are awake and are comfortable we will take you back up to the ward.

You may experience a sore throat following a general anaesthetic; this is normal and will ease once you start to drink.

Local anaesthetic - this can be used for some minor surgery. A local anaesthetic involves an injection around the operation site given by the surgeon that will block the nerve function. You may be aware of the sensation of touch but will not feel pain.

If you have a local anaesthetic you will be awake. There will be someone with you throughout the procedure to talk to you and explain what is happening. Some monitoring equipment may still be necessary, for example, blood pressure recording but this will be minimal.

Regional anaesthetics - there are a number of techniques that come under this heading. Most of these involve injection of a local anaesthetic drug, given by an anaesthetist directly to a collection of nerves, which will numb sensation to a whole area of the body. Sometimes, regional anaesthesia can be given as well as general anaesthetic to improve post-operative pain relief.

Spinal anaesthesia - this is a suitable technique for many surgical procedures of the lower half of the body. It involves an anaesthetist injecting local anaesthetic into your back, which “freezes” the lower part of the body. It is very safe and effective and provides excellent pain relief during the procedure. You will be monitored in the same way as you would for a general anaesthetic throughout the procedure. If you wish, you can bring an I-Pod with you and listen to music of your choice.

You may also want some sedation, which can relax you and make you feel a bit drowsy. Side effects of a spinal anaesthetic are few, the most common being a drop in blood pressure. This is treated by connecting you to a “drip” that will improve your blood pressure.

Headaches are few with spinal anaesthesia, however, should this happen you will be given painkillers. The anaesthetist will discuss spinal anaesthetic with you, if appropriate, for your surgery. The most common procedures using a spinal anaesthetic include: hip and knee surgery, hernia repairs, foot or leg procedures.

Sedation - some procedures, particularly gynaecology and dental, you may be offered sedation. This involves an injection through a needle in your vein. It relaxes you and makes you feel sleepy.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long will I be in theatre?

It is difficult to give an exact time for your stay in theatre as many factors can influence this, however, your surgeon or anaesthetist can usually give an estimation.

Do I have to remove my dentures before coming to theatre?

You will be asked to remove them if you are having a general anaesthetic. However, you do not have to remove them on the ward, you can bring a denture pot with you and remove them in theatre. We can help you put them back in once you are in the recovery room too. The same applies to glasses and hearing aids, these can be brought with you and returned to you in the recovery room once you have woken up.

For local and spinal anaesthetic you are usually able to keep them in providing they are not too loose. This is at the discretion of the anaesthetist. Glasses and hearing aids may be worn.