

# Your baby's operation

**This leaflet explains what happens when your baby needs surgery. If you have any more questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor or nurse caring for your baby**

## Consent - asking for your consent

The neonatologist (baby doctor) and surgeon will talk to you about the need for surgery. The surgeon who will be doing your baby's operation will explain to you what it involves, the intended benefits, and any risks.

They will discuss any extra procedures that may become necessary during the operation, including the possible need for a blood transfusion. If you decide to go ahead, the surgeon will ask you to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to your baby having the operation.

More information about giving permission for your baby's treatment is available in our leaflet, **Consent to treatment for your child**. If you do not have a copy, please ask your doctor or nurse for one.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic makes sure the patient is asleep and does not feel any pain during an operation. Anaesthetists, care for all patients having an anaesthetic. All babies having surgery will be cared for by paediatric (children's) anaesthetists.

Before the operation the anaesthetist will see your baby, and talk to you about the anaesthetic technique. Sometimes, the anaesthetist might decide to delay your baby's operation if they feel it would be safer for your baby. If this happens, they will explain the reasons fully.

More information about anaesthesia is available in our leaflet, **Your child's general anaesthetic**.

## Operation timing

You will be told the date of the operation and potential time. The actual time of the operation may change at short notice, and sometimes the operation may have to be cancelled. This can be for different reasons, and might be because another child needs urgent surgery at that time. If the operation is cancelled, we will explain to you, and give you a new date for your baby's operation.

## Preparing your baby before surgery

It is important that your baby's stomach is empty for the operation. This lessens the risk of your baby being sick while unconscious, which could lead to complications.

**Breastfed babies** - You can breastfeed your baby up to 4 hours before the operation. The nurse looking after your baby will tell what time this is.

**Babies having bottle-milk** - You can give your baby bottle-milk up to 6 hours before the operation. The nurse looking after your baby will tell what time this is.

While your baby is not being fed, we will stop them getting dehydrated with liquid through a cannula (small tube) into a vein (drip). A second cannula may be put into another vein. This allows the anaesthetist to give the anaesthetic as well as any other necessary medicines.

On the day of the operation your baby will have a special cream applied into their nose, and be given a wash with a special lotion (Octenisan®). They will then be dressed in a clean gown with clean cot linen. The cream and wash is to make sure the skin is thoroughly cleansed, reducing the amount of bacteria normally found, and consequently reducing the risk of infection.

The nurse caring for your baby will complete a checklist to make sure that your baby is fully prepared for the operation, and that any other relevant information is available.

## Transfer to the operating theatre

The operating theatres are in the Evelina London Children's Hospital (at St Thomas' Hospital). Your baby will be taken there in a transport incubator. This is an incubator that is designed for moving babies around. A doctor, nurse and porter will accompany your baby and usually you will be able to go with them. Sometimes we can take the baby to the theatre in a cot or pram.

Your baby will be taken into the anaesthetic room, which is next to the operating theatre. There you will meet a member of the theatre staff who, (with your baby's nurse) will check your baby's details with the checklist. The nurse will then take you back to the neonatal unit where you can wait for your baby to come back.

## After the operation

Depending on the type of surgery your baby has had, they may be taken to the recovery room (near the operating theatre) before coming back to the neonatal unit. Specially trained recovery nurses will monitor your baby until they wake up.

Your baby will be collected from the operating theatre by a nurse, doctor and porter. We will let you know when we go to collect your baby so that you can be there when they arrive.

After the surgery, the surgeon will explain what they did in the operation. They will come and speak to you on the neonatal unit or they will phone you.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the neonatal unit, **t:** 020 7188 4045. Your call can then be directed to the right area.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, **w:** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

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