

Is there anything that makes people unsuitable for local anaesthetic to the eye?

- They cannot lie reasonably flat and still for around 20minutes to half hour
- They have persistent cough
- They have difficulty understanding and following instructions
- They have a known allergy to local anaesthetic drugs.

I would prefer a general anaesthetic: do I have a choice? Yes, nothing will happen to you until you understand and agree with what has been planned for you. You will need to discuss your preference with the anaesthetist who will guide you to the appropriate pathway for having your eye surgery done under a general anaesthetic.

For further advice, please telephone:

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Local Anaesthesia for Eye Surgery

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Local Anaesthesia for Eye Surgery

What is a local anaesthetic?

A local anaesthetic is an injection or eye drops that stop you feeling pain, although you are still awake and aware of your surroundings. The aim is that you feel no pain during the surgery.

How is the local anaesthetic given?

There are two types of local anaesthetic for eye surgery

1. Some operations can be carried out simply with eye drops that numb the eye.
2. However, most operations require eye drops and a local anaesthetic injection near the eyeball

Is the local anaesthetic injection painful?

This varies from person to person. Eye drops that numb the surface of the eye are used first to make it as comfortable as possible. A very fine needle is then used for the injection which can cause a feeling of stinging or pressure. This usually lasts less than a minute.

How do I know the local anaesthetic is working?

The anaesthetist will make sure that your eye is numb before surgery. You may be asked to look in different directions to assess the effects of the anaesthetic.

Can I speak during the operation?

No, it's best to stay quiet as speaking can move your face and affect the surgery. You can move your hand gently if you wish to say something.

What will I hear?

You will hear the surgeon talking to the theatre team and the sounds of the theatre equipment and monitors.

Can I wear my hearing aids during the operation?

It is usual practice to remove the hearing aid on the same side as the eye being operated. This is because even with care, water can enter the ear and the hearing aid may malfunction and start to make noises.

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Will I see something?

You will usually be able to see bright lights and may also see some movements, but no detail.

What if I blink?

A small clip keeps your eyelids open on the eye being operated, so you do not need to worry about blinking. You can blink the non-operative eye as usual.

Can I have something to calm me down?

Your anaesthetist and theatre staff are used to giving reassurance, which helps people relax. Sedatives are avoided as they can sometimes slow your breathing and make you sleepy which can lead to difficulty during the operation. Please discuss your wishes with your anaesthetist.

Advantages of local anaesthesia?

- A local anaesthetic provides pain relief during and after the operation.
- It has fewer side effects than a general anaesthetic because it does not affect other parts of your body
- People recover faster after a local anaesthetic and can go home the same day.
- You can eat and drink and have your usual medications as normal.

Are there any complications of local anaesthetics?

Local anaesthesia for eye surgery is regarded as the safest anaesthetic for most people. The most common complication is bruising or a black eye as the injection damages small blood vessels around the eye. Although it looks unsightly, the bruising generally only lasts a week or so. It is more common if you take aspirin or other blood thinning medicines. Very rarely, the eye muscles and the eye ball itself may be damaged. Your anaesthetist or eye surgeon will be able to give you more information about these complications.