

Caring for someone recovering from a general anaesthetic or sedation

Patients may not be able to think clearly and their judgement may be affected for up to 24 hours after a general anaesthetic or sedation.

During this time, they should:

- not be responsible for children or other people in their care
- not drive a vehicle or ride a bicycle
- not cook or use any machinery
- not make any important decisions, even if they think they feel okay
- avoid posting on social media/public forums
- not drink alcohol.

You have been asked to take a relative or friend home and look after them after they have had sedation for their treatment or a procedure under general anaesthetic. This leaflet gives you general information about what they should and should not do whilst they recover and what you should expect. This should help you to plan ahead.

What should I expect?

The sedation medicine or anaesthetic can make some patients slightly confused and unsteady after their treatment. Importantly, it can affect their judgement so they may not be able to think clearly. This may last for up to 24 hours, so until the next day. You should keep a careful eye on them during this time. It can be helpful to consider how they will manage when they come home from the hospital. For example, some may find it helpful if a bed is moved to the ground floor.



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When can I collect my friend or relative?

Staff in the hospital will only allow them to go home when they have recovered well from the procedure, and you are there to accompany them. As patients must not drive for 24 hours after a general anaesthetic or sedation, you should be a capable adult over 18 years old and should take them home by car or taxi ideally – not public transport.



Staff will not be able to give you an exact discharge time as some patients take longer than others to recover after an anaesthetic, sedation or surgery. However, you will be given an approximate time or a number to call. The nurse will also take your phone number to contact you. If the patient is not able to walk, a wheelchair should be provided to enable them to go safely to your transport.

Will I be told what I need to do?

The doctors will give written instructions specific to your friend or relative, which should include:

- what to expect when they go home
- instructions about eating, drinking and taking their normal medication after the procedure
- anything of concern to look out for and a number to contact at the hospital if you or they have any questions or if they do not feel well
- things they can and cannot do after their procedure
- information about any additional medication they may need to take, such as pain relief
- information about washing and care of wounds. You should read these instructions with your friend or relative and help ensure that they are followed.

What should my friend or relative do at home?

This will depend on the type of procedure they have had and the instructions from the hospital. In general, they should:

- get plenty of rest to help them recover
- not walk unaided if they are unsteady, and ideally avoid stairs
- carefully follow instructions from the hospital about taking their usual medication and any additional pain relief
- follow the instructions they have been given by the hospital about eating, drinking and washing.



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What should they not do?

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- not drink alcohol.
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Disclaimer

We try very hard to keep the information in this leaflet accurate and up-to-date, but we cannot guarantee this. We don't expect this general information to cover all the questions you might have or to deal with everything that might be important to you. You should discuss your choices and any worries you have with your medical team, using this leaflet as a guide. This leaflet on its own should not be treated as advice. It cannot be used for any commercial or business purpose. For full details, please see our website:

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Information for healthcare professionals on printing this leaflet

Please consider the visual impairments of patients when printing or photocopying this leaflet. Photocopies of photocopies are discouraged because these tend to be low-quality prints and can be very difficult for patients to read. Please also make sure that you use the latest version of this leaflet, which is available on the RCoA website:

rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/leaflets-video-resources.

Tell us what you think

We welcome suggestions to improve this leaflet. Please complete this short survey: surveymonkey.co.uk/r/testmain or scan the QR code with your mobile.



If you have any general comments, please email them to: patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk.

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This leaflet will be reviewed within three years of the date of publication.

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