

Information For Patients

Anaesthesia for Thoracic Operations (Operations on the lungs and chest)



part of or even the whole of one lung. Thoracotomy operations require very good pain relief and the best technique available is called **Epidural Analgesia**. This technique involves the injection of different types of drugs onto the pain nerves that supply the chest wall. This is achieved by placing a very small plastic tube into an area of your back called the epidural space. Your anaesthetist will explain all about epidural analgesia at the pre-operative visit. Sometimes, it is not possible to do an epidural injection, or you simply may not wish to have one. In these cases, alternatives are available including injections of morphine that you may administer to yourself from a special pump (**Patient Controlled Analgesia or P.C.A.**) and a different type of nerve injection called a Paravertebral Block. Your anaesthetist can discuss these options with you at the pre-operative visit.

There are various other types of chest operations such as Mediastinoscopy, Mediastinotomy, Video Assisted Thoracoscopy (V.A.T.), Pleurectomy and Bronchoscopy. If you are having one of these operations, your anaesthetist will discuss with you the best methods for pain relief at the pre-operative visit.

At the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital there is an Acute Pain Service dedicated to the provision of high quality post-operative pain relief. The anaesthetic department provides this service. There is an Acute Pain Nurse Specialist who will visit you on a daily basis after your operation to ensure that all is well.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained
www.lhch.nhs.uk

For specific queries, information can be obtained via the Anaesthetic Secretary Direct Line - 0151 600 1296

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other format or language please contact us quoting the leaflet code and the language or format you require.

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CTPALS075
Publication date January 2008
Review August 2010
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This leaflet has been written to provide information about anaesthesia prior to your operation. We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or nursing staff.

Arrangements have been made for you to come into the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital for an operation. This leaflet is designed to provide you with some information about the anaesthetic that you will have and also about how your pain will be controlled after the operation. People come into our hospital for a variety of different operations and so the information in this leaflet is of a general nature and not specific to the exact operation that you are to have.

The Pre-Operative Anaesthetic Visit

Before your operation, an anaesthetist will come and see you on the ward. This visit will usually take place on the day before your operation. Anaesthetists are fully qualified doctors with specialist skills in pain relief and intensive care as well as in anaesthesia.

Your anaesthetist will ask you about your general health and any previous anaesthetics you may have had, and will also ask about the medication, if any, that you are taking.

Your anaesthetist will then talk with you about the anaesthetic that you are to have and also discuss how your pain will be controlled after the operation.

Any fears and worries that you have concerning the anaesthetic or pain relief can be discussed with the anaesthetist at this pre-operative visit.

The anaesthetist will prescribe a pre-med tablet for you to take an hour or so before your operation. This is to help you feel more relaxed when you come to theatre. Of course, you do not have to take this if you don't want to but most people find a pre-med to be calming and relaxing.

The anaesthetist will also leave instructions regarding eating and drinking before your operation. People having an operation in the morning are usually asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight. For operations in the afternoon, it is sometimes acceptable to eat a light breakfast at around 06.30 a.m. The anaesthetist will leave specific instructions about this with the nursing staff on the ward so that you do not need to worry about having to remember yourself.

On the day of your operation, you will be taken to theatre on your ward bed. You will be met by the anaesthetic assistant who will check that all the details about you and your operation are correct.

The Anaesthetic

Your operation will almost certainly require that you have a general anaesthetic. All this means is that you are given drugs to make you go to sleep for the duration of your operation. Before you are given any anaesthetic, certain monitors will be attached to you to measure your blood pressure and heart rate. A drip will

then be inserted into one of the veins on your hand or arm. A local anaesthetic is given first to numb the skin so that any discomfort you feel when the drip is put in should be very mild. You will then be asked to breathe some oxygen for a minute or so from a mask which you can hold yourself if you wish. The anaesthetist will then slowly inject the anaesthetic into the drip in your arm and send you gently off to sleep. The operation will then proceed and the anaesthetist will continually monitor you during the operation to keep you asleep and make sure that you wake up safely at the end of your operation.

Pain Relief after your Operation

Following an operation, you will inevitably feel a certain amount of pain. One of the main priorities of your anaesthetist is to reduce as much as possible the amount of pain you experience. Your anaesthetist will discuss with you the various methods of pain relief that are available at the pre-operative visit.

Good pain relief is very important after chest operations because it allows people to breathe and cough without too much difficulty. If people are unable to cough easily then they will not be able to clear phlegm and sputum from their chest and this can lead to chest infections and even pneumonia. For this reason, the anaesthetists at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital consider good pain relief after chest operations to be of the utmost importance. The method of pain relief your anaesthetist will suggest will depend on the type of operation that you are going to have. A thoracotomy operation is a major operation that involves opening of the chest and removal of a

It is important that you bring all of your medicines with you to the hospital

Normally on the day of surgery patients are not allowed to eat or drink from midnight

Having a general anaesthetic means that you are given drugs to make you go to sleep for the duration of your operation