



Why do I need to see an anaesthetist during my pregnancy?

Patient Information Leaflet

May 2020

What do anaesthetists do and why should I see an anaesthetist during pregnancy?

An anaesthetist is a doctor who has chosen to specialise in anaesthesia, intensive care medicine and pain management.

Anaesthetists who work within maternity have the following roles:

- Providing an epidural service
- Undertaking spinal anaesthesia and (rarely) general anaesthesia for women having caesarean sections
- Providing specialist advice for women who are critically unwell during their maternity unit stay.

One of the main aims of care during pregnancy is to provide a woman in advance, with appropriate information about the possible choices that she will have at the time of delivery. For women who may need extra help delivering their baby, this might include information about epidural anaesthesia, spinal anaesthesia and general anaesthesia. Anaesthetists are the best people to provide information about the risks and benefits of these options.

Some medical conditions can make anaesthetic procedures more challenging. (For example, blood disorders, heart disease, a brain or spinal disease, having a high BMI or having had previous problems with anaesthesia. The anaesthetist can advise you regarding any extra precautions which would be recommended during or after birth.

You have been offered an appointment to talk to an anaesthetist during your pregnancy because you have a condition or symptom which may make any necessary anaesthetic procedures more challenging. You will be able to ask questions about an epidural, spinal anaesthetic or general anaesthetic. Even if you are not planning to have an epidural or a caesarean section, these procedures are sometimes done as an emergency. This is your opportunity to think about what you might want and to ask questions in a relaxed environment, rather than when you are having contractions. Things can happen very quickly during labour and the more information you have, the more prepared you will be.

Anaesthesia for Caesarean Section

In most cases, a regional anaesthetic (a spinal or an epidural) is the safest option for a Caesarean section. This means that an injection is given into your back (either by injection into the spine or through a tube placed into your back) to make the lower part of your body numb. With a regional anaesthetic you stay awake during the operation. Being awake has many advantages for you and your baby during and after the operation.

If an epidural is working well in labour, it can often be used for a Caesarean section.

And Finally...

When you come to hospital in labour, please tell your midwife that you have seen an anaesthetist during your pregnancy. This will prompt the midwife to look at any anaesthetic plans which have been agreed in the antenatal period.

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

If you require an interpreter, please ask an appropriate person to contact our central booking office between Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm on 0161 922 6991 to arrange this for you.

語言翻譯及病者支持服務 (LIPS):

如果閣下需要翻譯員在您的預約當日幫助您的話 請找一名合適的家庭成員 0161 922 6991 聯絡本中央預約辦事處來您您安排 我們的辦公時間是星期一至星期五 上午 8 時至下午 5 時

Językowo Tłumaczeniowa Usługa Pomocy dla Pacjenta (Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service LIPS):

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy tłumacza w trakcie swojej wizyty, proszę poprosić odpowiedniego członka rodziny o skontaktowanie się z Centralnym Biurem Zamówień (Central Booking Office), w celu zorganizowania tłumacza pomiędzy poniedziałkiem a piątkiem w godzinach od 08:00 - 17:00 pod numerem 0161 922 6991.

لینگویج، انٹرنپریٹیشن اینڈپیشنٹ سپورٹ سروس (Lips)

اگر آپ کو اپنی اپائنٹمنٹ کے لئے مترجم کی مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے خاندان کے کسی موزوں فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہمارے سنٹرل بکنگ آفس سے پیر سے جمعہ 8.00 بجے صبح سے 5.00 بجے شام کے دوران 0161 922 6991 پر فون کر کے اس کا بندوبست کریں۔

Document control information

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