

General anaesthesia advice

What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic is when the patient is placed into a state of unconsciousness. They are not able to feel pain, are relaxed and have no memory of what happens to them when they are under general anaesthesia.

Surgical procedures, such as neutering, dentals and anything that is likely to be painful require anaesthesia. Sometimes it may be necessary to place a pet under anaesthesia for procedures when it is essential that they remain still, such as x-rays and for some samples to be collected. There are many drugs and combinations of drugs that can be given to achieve anaesthesia. The choice of anaesthetic is based on many factors. The age of the animal, health status and the procedure to be undertaken are all considered when deciding on which anaesthetic to use.

Normally, a premedicant is given first. This helps to relax the muscles and has a calming effect, but doesn't usually render the patient unconscious. Other drugs or anaesthetic gas is needed to achieve general anaesthesia. Animals are usually maintained under anaesthesia by an anaesthetic gas delivered via an endotracheal (ET) tube placed in their trachea (windpipe).

The ET tube also ensures that the animal has a secure airway throughout anaesthesia, should an emergency occur.

Is anaesthesia safe?

Yes and no. No anaesthetic is 100% safe, 100% of the time. No two animals ever react the same to an anaesthetic, but anaesthesia has become far more reliable and safe over the last decade. Recent evidence suggests that the death rate during anaesthesia in healthy dogs is about 1 in 1800 dogs and in healthy cats it is about 1 in 900 cats, suggesting that the risks of anaesthesia are greater in cats than dogs. The risk of death increases in patients that are unhealthy.

There are several ways that the risks of anaesthesia can be minimised. This may include a pre-operative blood test or the use of intravenous fluids during the procedure. At Parkside, our practice protocol is to routinely perform blood tests in all clinically normal dogs and cats undergoing an anaesthetic once they are 6 years or older. This cost for this test is £39.55. Any unwell dog or cat, of any age, undergoing anaesthesia will have an extended blood panel taken at a cost of £84.96. Intravenous fluid therapy will be used in all procedures which are

continued overleaf ➡



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☎ 01382 810777
📍 5 Kings Cross Road, DD2 3PT
✉ dundee.surgery@parksidevets.com

BARNHILL BRANCH

☎ 01382 739634
📍 58 Dalhousie Road, DD5 2UB
✉ barnhill.surgery@parksidevets.com

ARBROATH BRANCH

☎ 01241 293777
📍 Unit 1, 22 East Muirlands Road, DD11 3ES
✉ arbroath.surgery@parksidevets.com

expected to take more than 90 minutes, at a cost of £66.49. Your Parkside vet will discuss the risks involved in any anaesthetic, the specific risks for the procedure your pet is undergoing and any recommended pre-operative tests with you either when booking the procedure or on admission to the surgery.

However, lowering the risk doesn't remove it completely, and there is always the possibility that any patient may suffer an adverse reaction to the drugs, die under anaesthetic, bleed excessively during or after surgery, or suffer complications.

Why do I need to fast my pet before an anaesthetic?

Some anaesthetic drugs can make pets feel nauseous. It is really important that your pet does not vomit whilst under anaesthetic or on recovery because there is a risk that they will inhale some of the vomit. Dogs and cats should not have anything to eat within 12 hours of an anaesthetic so that their stomach is empty. If you think your pet may have had access to food, you must let your vet know when you take them in for an anaesthetic and your vet will decide whether to reschedule the procedure.

Will my pet need special care following an anaesthetic?

Your vet will want to keep your pet in the surgery until they are sure that he/she is fully recovered from the anaesthetic. Once your pet gets home they will probably want to rest quietly for 24 hours but should be eating and drinking normally by then. If your pet is uncomfortable following surgery, they will be reluctant to eat, and therefore it is important to provide good pain relief to ensure a rapid recovery. Speak to your vet if you are concerned that your pet is uncomfortable, restless or reluctant to eat.



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