



**GENERAL ANAESTHETIC FOR CAESAREAN SECTION (CS)  
INFORMATION CARD**

This card is to give you some information about being put to sleep with a general anaesthetic.

- A general anaesthetic is often needed for an emergency Caesarean section if there is not enough time to put in a spinal anaesthetic or an epidural.
- You will have a needle called an intravenous cannula placed in your hand or arm.
- One risk of a general anaesthetic is that the acid in your stomach can pass into your lungs when you are asleep. To reduce this risk, you may be given an injection through a drip or into your leg, and you may be given antacid medicine to drink.
- In the operating theatre a mask will be placed over your face for you to breathe oxygen through. The mask may feel tight, but it is important to give you extra oxygen.
- The general anaesthetic will be given into your drip. As you fall asleep, you will feel pressure on your neck. This is to protect your airway and lungs.
- Your birth partner will not be able to be with you to the operating theatre, but they will be nearby.
- You will wake up in the recovery room and can see your baby as soon as you are awake.
- When you wake up, your throat may feel sore and you may feel sick. More painkillers and anti-sickness medication will be available if you need them.

In the UK each year, 17,000 general anaesthetics are given to women who are having a Caesarean section, and there are few complications. However, there are some risks and side-effects of general anaesthetics. These are shown on the other side of this card.

## RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF GENERAL ANAESTHESIA

Possible Problem	How common the problem is
Shivering	Common - about 1 in 3 people
Sore throat	Common – about 1 in 2 people
Feeling Sick	Common – about 1 in 10 people
Muscle Pain	Common – about 1 in 3 people
Cuts or bruises to lips and tongue Damage to teeth	Occasional – about 1 in 20 people Quite rare – about 1 in 4,500 people
The anaesthetist failing to insert a breathing tube when you are asleep Chest Infection Acid from your stomach going into your lungs	Uncommon – about 1 in 250 people Common – about 1 in 10 people – but most infections are not severe Quite rare – about 1 in 1,000 people
Being awake during the procedure	Uncommon – about 1 in 400 people
Severe allergic reaction	Rare – about 1 in 10,000 people
Death or brain damage	Death: Very rare – fewer than 1 in 100,000 (1 or 2 people a year in the UK) Brain damage: Very rare – exact figures are not known

Accurate figures are not available for all of these risks and side effects. Figures are estimates and may vary from hospital to hospital. If you have any questions you should discuss these with your anaesthetist.

**You can get more information by downloading the leaflet ‘Anaesthesia for Caesarean Section’ from the Royal College of Anaesthetists website at [www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk).**

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