



Health Awareness

A Wake-Up Call About Anesthesia

(NAPSA)—If you're like the average American about to undergo surgery, you probably have many questions swimming in your head:

- How many times has the surgeon done this particular procedure?
- Will I be in pain during my recovery?
- Could something go wrong?

But have you ever stopped to think about the anesthesia you will be receiving? Anesthesia is an important part of the surgical process that often gets overlooked by the patient.

Below are some common myths and facts associated with anesthesia:

Myth: Anesthesia is a safe and simple procedure with minimal side effects.

Fact: Put simply, anesthesia is being free from pain. Yet, the process of anesthesia is more complicated. For example, in addition to controlling pain, the anesthesiologist is responsible for controlling all of the patient's vital life functions during surgery. While great strides have been made to improve patient safety, all anesthetics carry some risks.

Myth: Anesthesia awareness is a common occurrence.

Fact: Anesthesia awareness affects between 20,000 and 40,000 of the approximately 21 million

people in the U.S. who receive general anesthesia every year. Although rare, it can have a significant impact on the mental health of any patient who experiences it.

Anesthesia awareness, also referred to as unintentional intraoperative awareness, is a rare but serious event that occurs when a patient under general anesthesia stays or becomes conscious during surgery but can't move or talk because the paralytic drugs are still in effect.



Myth: Anesthesia awareness is normal and happens when you have been consciously sedated and are sleepy but still slightly awake. You can't feel any pain.

Fact: Anesthesia awareness, also referred to as unintentional intraoperative awareness, is a rare but serious event that occurs when a patient under general anesthesia stays or becomes conscious during surgery but can't move or talk because the paralytic drugs are still in effect.

It does not occur during conscious or intravenous (IV) sedation, which is used to relax you and make you feel sleepy. Through an IV, you receive pain medication and a mild sedative.

Both drugs cause temporary forgetfulness. Even though you may not remember anything that

occurs during conscious sedation, you remain awake enough during that time to respond to questions and retain your protective reflexes.

Myth: There is nothing you can do to help monitor for anesthesia awareness.

Fact: New technologies are available that complement traditional anesthesia control monitoring, called Level of Consciousness (LOC) monitors. LOC monitors use brain wave activity to measure a patient's state of consciousness. SNAP II is a new LOC monitor that offers a sensitive measurement of a patient's brain function and responds rapidly to changes in level of consciousness.

Myth: Doctors are required to use LOC monitors.

Fact: LOC monitors are not yet standard of practice, but are becoming more and more widespread as professionals look to fine-tune their monitoring techniques and ensure they are doing all they can to optimize the patient outcome.

These are just a few points about anesthesia, but be sure to take the time to ask your surgeon and your anesthesiologist questions. You can also learn more about anesthesia, anesthesia awareness and LOC monitoring at [www.OR-Live.com/Anesthesia Awareness](http://www.OR-Live.com/AnesthesiaAwareness).