

Anesthesia

Modern anesthesia is extremely safe. Most data suggest that you are more likely to get hurt driving to the hospital on the day of your surgery rather than have a problem with anesthesia. Your anesthesiologist will speak directly with you prior to surgery to review your choice of anesthesia. The goal of the anesthesia is to keep you safe while Dr. Beamer operates. Unless there are extremely special circumstances, you will not remember any part of the surgery. Your first memory after waking up is often the recovery room. With that said, there are two major types of anesthesia that are used: General and Regional. While Dr. Beamer leaves the final decision up to you and the anesthesiologist, there are certain circumstances where he strongly recommends one over another.

General Anesthesia

General anesthesia is used for many types of major surgery. During general anesthesia the entire body, including the brain is anesthetized. The patient has no awareness, feels nothing and remembers nothing of the surgical experience. General anesthesia is administered by injecting a liquid anesthetic into a vein or by breathing a gas anesthetic flowing from an anesthesia machine through a mask or tube. A plastic tube is inserted into your throat which allows the anesthesia machine to breathe for you. You may have a sore throat and some nausea for 72 hours after surgery. If you have had nausea after another surgery or easily get car sick, be sure to let your anesthesiologist know so he or she can prescribe medication to help manage that problem.

Regional Anesthesia

In regional anesthesia, numbing medication is injected into the nerves as they travel from the spinal cord to your extremity. As a consequence, you will have no pain after your surgery, but will also not be able to move your extremity very well. Usually the effects of the nerve block last for 8 - 12 hours, but can rarely last up to 24 hours. Your mental alertness will not be affected at all by this numbing medication. To receive the injection, you lie down while the anesthesiologist injects the medication around your nerves. To make the placement of the needle almost painless, your skin is first numbed with medication. During the surgery, however, the anesthesiologist will give you sedation so that you do not remember the surgery. It is important to start taking the pain medication as soon as the numbness starts to wear off.