Welcome to Horizon Anesthesia

Horizon Anesthesia brings world-class anesthesia services to patients in the comfort of their dentist’s office. Like our hospital-based practice, the total focus of our highly qualified and experienced board certified anesthesiologists is an uncompromising commitment to your child’s safety and comfort.

Why does my child need anesthesia?
Young children are often unable to manage the sound of drilling, the fear of pain and separation from parents when they are being treated at a dentist’s office; older children may also experience anxiety. While at times older children are calmed with an oral sedative in combination with inhaled nitrous oxide, for many children it is better and safer to use a general anesthetic, which puts the child to sleep during a procedure. This requires the skills of a pediatric anesthesiologist.

Many parents have a fear of anesthesia, often believing that it can increase problems for the child. However, many studies – and our experience – have shown that care given by a pediatric anesthesiologist decreases risk.

Horizon Anesthesia provides anesthesia services right in the dentist’s office. We can help minimize fears and ensure that anxious children will cooperate, allowing the dentist to complete the child’s dental care safely and efficiently. There was a time when anesthesia was only administered in hospitals, but with today’s ultra-compact anesthesia and monitoring equipment, we have the ability to create a safe and convenient surgery center setting for dental sedation. By having the procedure in the dental office, parents can avoid the inconvenience and expense of a hospital visit while children experience minimal or no awareness of the dental procedure. We strictly adhere to American Society of Anesthesiologists standards and guidelines of care.
What do anesthesiologists do?
Just as there are doctors who specialize in different aspects of a child’s care such as pediatricians and pediatric dentists, there are doctors called anesthesiologists with special training in the anesthetic care of children. Our main task is to provide safe, optimal conditions during surgery and other painful procedures, while making the entire experience as pleasant and comfortable as possible. We understand your concerns, and we will do everything we can to make your child’s experience a positive and safe one.

We know that children are not just small adults. Their medical care requires an approach geared toward their unique physical, emotional, and developmental differences. The procedures we use for children are safe, non-threatening and in keeping with our philosophy to provide quality health care to all patients. Because we specialize in the care of babies and small children, we can extend this care to the very youngest patients.

Who will administer my child’s anesthesia?
A pediatric anesthesiologist will be assigned to your child. Horizon anesthesiologists have graduated from accredited United States medical schools, completed a residency of at least three years in anesthesiology, have extensive experience with children of all ages undergoing anesthesia, and are all diplomates of the American Board of Anesthesiology (board certified). Some have additional qualifications; many have been on staff in children’s hospitals or completed additional fellowships in pediatric anesthesiology. Our physicians presently provide anesthesia services throughout the Washington D.C., metro area.

Your pediatric anesthesiologist will perform all aspects of the anesthesia, and your child will remain under their supervision. We are committed to each child in our care. Our skill and medical judgment have been refined over years of hospital work caring for critically-ill children during complex operations, and should give you confidence that your child will be safe in our hands. You will be contacted by the anesthesiologist prior to the day of your child’s procedure so that you can speak with the anesthesiologist if necessary, should any questions or concerns arise. After your child’s dental procedure, the anesthesiologist will remain involved until your child is allowed to go home.

Easing your child’s fears – What to tell your child
As a parent, you play a key role in your child’s care. It is important that you begin preparing your child for the procedure as soon as it has been scheduled. Children naturally fear the unknown, and will tolerate anesthesia better when they are well prepared. Anything you can do to relieve anxiety and inform your child about the coming events will improve your child’s experience. Making the experience pleasant begins in the dental office, where you and your child can meet with your pediatric dentist and establish a rapport that can help put your child at ease. The dentist should answer any initial questions you may have about the process at that time. Once you know what will happen, you will be better prepared to talk calmly and honestly with your child about their procedure. Be direct and honest. Reassure your child that everything done during the visit will be explained beforehand.

Your composure as a parent is essential. Nothing calms a child more than a confident parent. Although it is natural for parents to be anxious when their children have surgery, it is best not to convey this to your child.

HELPFUL TIPS:
Let your child know that:
• He or she will have a procedure and may have some discomfort after
• While he or she will be in unfamiliar surroundings, he or she will meet friendly doctors and nurses
• He or she can bring a favorite toy, blanket or other comforting object
• You will be with him or her until they go to sleep, and when they awaken
• It is not a “normal” sleep, but that he or she will wake up afterwards

Pre-anesthesia instructions
Eating and Drinking: It is extremely important that your child have an empty stomach at the time we administer anesthesia. Vomiting of food during anesthesia may be dangerous. For this reason, at least eight hours prior to the procedure your child must not have any food, milk or other solids; if your child eats, the sedation will need to be rescheduled. Clear liquids (water or apple juice) may be given up to three hours before the appointment. For example, if the appointment is at 9 a.m., your child must not eat after 1 a.m., but may have clear liquids only until 6 a.m. They should not have anything by mouth after 6 a.m. Do not leave your child unattended or send him or her to school or day care.
You must supervise the child constantly on the day of the appointment to make sure that your child does not eat.

**Illness:** Minor illnesses such as sniffles and colds may cause problems during some types of surgery and anesthesia. If your child develops a cough, nausea, or fever, please notify the dental office. If necessary, they will contact us to discuss the child’s condition with you and determine if we can safely proceed.

**Medications:** If your child takes any prescribed medication, have him or her continue it on the day of the appointment. If it is an oral medication, let your child take it with a small sip of water. If it is an inhaler, have your child use it at the usual time.

**Clothing:** We recommend loose fitting, easily removable clothes for the dental procedure. The shirt layer closest to the skin should be short sleeved. Please bring a change of clothing and a warm blanket. If appropriate, have your child wear a diaper and bring an extra one.

**Adult Escort:** A responsible adult must accompany the child to the office, remain there during the procedure and be prepared to take the child home upon discharge.

**The day of surgery**
A pediatric anesthesiologist will contact you prior to the scheduled dental procedure to find out about any health problems your child may have, review the eating and drinking instructions with you, and discuss the details of your child’s personalized anesthesia plan.

Upon arrival at the dentist’s office, your child will be able to play in a reception area with a variety of toys. This helps relieve anxiety and makes time pass more quickly. Just prior to the procedure, we will meet with you and your child. We will review your child’s medical conditions with you, as well as the anesthetic procedure planned for him or her and any potential risks. You will be asked important questions about your child’s health so we can determine if he or she is in satisfactory physical condition before surgery. This is the best time for you and your child to ask questions and express any concerns you may have. Your input concerning your child’s care will be helpful and appreciated.

You may be concerned about your child’s reaction to being separated from you during surgery. It is our policy to keep parents with their children during the start of anesthesia and when they awaken from anesthesia.

**Administering the anesthesia**
At the time of the procedure, you will walk with your child back to the procedure area. You will sit with your child in your lap, and your child will go to sleep by taking a few breaths from a mask. This is the most common way to start anesthesia, especially in young children. With this approach, your child will be asked to breathe through a mask quietly, and no needle sticks will be performed until after your child is asleep. Sometimes the mask is scented with a pleasant smell, and children may choose a scent that they like (such as watermelon, banana, etc.). Often we will tell a story while they fall asleep. Because some of the monitoring equipment may look frightening to a child, it will be attached after the child goes to sleep.

For patients with disabilities or those who cannot cooperate, we may start the anesthesia while still in the waiting area by either injecting sedative medicine into your child’s arm, or by using an oral medication. If we choose to use an injection, it will feel like a vaccination. After approximately three minutes, your child will be drowsy and will not recall anything further.

If we choose an oral sedative, it may taste bitter, and may take 10 minutes to achieve some sedation. This will help your child relax and be willing to accept an anesthesia mask. Children who receive pre-medication become relaxed or drowsy in the pre-procedure area while in your arms and have little recall of events.

After you return to the waiting area, we will start a child-sized intravenous (IV) line and attach the monitoring equipment, and then deepen the anesthetic to the required level. A balanced salt fluid solution will be administered to minimize thirst and dehydration.

Once the IV begins, a breathing tube will be inserted to help ensure that your child’s airway is protected and that your child receives adequate oxygen and ventilation during the procedure. Anesthesia is continued throughout your child’s surgery either through inhaled gases or intravenous medications. Anesthetics provide complete pain relief and loss of consciousness during an operation. All anesthetics can affect various organs in the body. Your pediatric anesthesiologist is specifically trained to help ensure that these side effects are minimized. We will be glad to explain more fully all the procedures involved when we meet with you prior to your child’s surgery.
Anesthesia safety and monitoring
Anesthesiologists consider any sedation given to your child to be of major importance. We monitor changes in breathing, heart action, blood pressure or unexpected events which, although rare, may occur during a procedure. We observe your child from the time he or she goes to sleep until the time he or she is awake.

Apart from helping ensure the safety of your child during surgery, anesthesiologists are specially trained in how to make the procedure as comfortable as possible. We understand how children perceive these procedures, and as physicians, will work with your child's dentist to improve the quality of your child's experience. To do this, we follow The American Society of Anesthesiologists guidelines and standards of care, and monitor the effects of anesthesia on your child during and after surgery. We use state-of-the-art monitoring to ensure your child is asleep, comfortable, and safe during the procedure, to minimize the time he or she is under an anesthetic as well as the time it takes for him or her to fully awaken.

All children undergoing anesthesia will have the following monitors available in both the procedure room and in the recovery area:

- Electrocardiograph (or, “EKG,” to monitor the heart rate continuously)
- Blood pressure cuff
- Oximeter (to assess the amount of oxygen in the blood)
- Temperature monitor

In addition, a monitor to measure levels of inhaled and exhaled gases (percent oxygen and carbon dioxide) is available in the procedure room.

Post-anesthesia instructions
Children awaken from anesthesia at different rates. Recovery from anesthesia varies depending on the type and duration of the procedure, the anesthetic used and your child’s health. Minor effects after anesthesia such as drowsiness, dry throat, shivering, occasional headaches and dizziness are common. Nausea may be present but vomiting is less common. Once treatment is completed, family members are then asked to remain with the patient in the recovery area for 30 to 60 minutes before leaving the office. Ask your anesthesiologist or surgeon if you have any concerns about the recovery.

Supervision: Anesthetic medication may cause drowsiness and impaired coordination; therefore, a responsible adult must supervise your child for 12 hours following the anesthesia. Allow your child to rest and observe him or her closely until recovery from the anesthesia is complete. Do not allow swimming, biking, skating or playing with other children for at least 12 hours.

Eating: Limit oral intake to liquids for the first few hours. Begin with water and follow with clear juice. If teeth were extracted, if possible do not allow your child to use a straw. Soft food may be consumed following the liquids. If your child is not hungry, do not force him or her to eat, but encourage as much liquid as tolerated.

Call us
We want to make your child’s experience as safe and pleasant as possible. If you have any concerns or questions not answered in this fact sheet, please do not hesitate to call Horizon Anesthesia at 703.560.7161.

Horizon Anesthesia is an affiliate of American Anesthesiology of Virginia

© 2011 American Anesthesiology™ All rights reserved.
2.2011