



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REGARDING GENERAL ANESTHESIA MEDICATIONS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

- In December 2016, the FDA issued a **drug safety communication** about general anesthesia and sedation in children younger than 3 years of age. The FDA is requiring the addition of warning labels on common anesthetic agents used for general anesthesia and sedation. These are not “Black Box” warnings.

Research on the link between anesthesia and brain development has been ongoing for two decades, and there is more research and investigation necessary to fully understand the risks.

- Recent animal and human studies suggest that young patients who need long surgeries (> 3 hours) or multiple surgeries before age 3 might be at risk for learning or behavior issues later in life.
 - On a more positive note, recent human studies have indicated that a brief, single exposure to anesthesia in this age group does not have a negative impact on future cognitive ability. In addition, scientists have recognized two classes of medications that can be used with anesthesia that do not appear to have an impact on developing brains.
- We understand that the decision to proceed with surgery and/or sedation on a young child is made after weighing all the benefits and risks, and that some procedures are necessary while a patient is younger than three years. At HSS we are, and have always been, committed to limiting the amount of general anesthesia medications given to this age group.
 - While we may not be able to always avoid these medications, we can minimize them by using, whenever possible, regional (local) anesthesia and the classes of medications that have been deemed safer for this age group.
 - However, because of intraoperative clinical decisions we can never rule out the possibility that one or more of the medications included in the FDA warnings might be used during your child's surgery.

The FDA is encouraging physicians to discuss this topic with any parent/guardian who has a young child undergoing anesthesia or sedation. If you are considering surgery for your child at HSS, please feel free to ask your surgeon, pediatrician or anesthesiologist any questions. Research on this topic is ongoing and new information becomes available frequently, you may find more information at SmartTots.org.