

Anesthesia for Young Children

You may have heard that on Dec. 14, 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a safety announcement regarding the potential effect of prolonged (greater than 3 hours) or repeated anesthetics on children younger than 3 years of age. However, further research is needed to fully characterize how early life anesthetic exposure may affect a child's brain development.

To better inform our patients' families, we have summarized points from the FDA's communication to help facilitate discussions and answer questions. Research is ongoing, but this is what we know so far:

- Rapid brain development occurs in children under 3 years of age.
- A single, short exposure to anesthesia appears to be safe.
- There is some evidence that longer (greater than 3 hours) or repeated exposures could have negative effects on behavior or learning.

There are risks associated with delaying indicated procedures. Because general anesthesia or sedation is necessary during procedures to keep your child safe and comfortable, here are a couple of items that we may want to discuss:

- Whether the procedure should be done now or may wait until a later date
- How long the procedure is expected to take
- Whether repeated procedures may be needed

You will have an opportunity to talk to your anesthesia team on the day of your child's scheduled procedure. In the meantime, here are some additional useful resources:

- Society for Pediatric Anesthesia website:
<http://www.pedsanesthesia.org/>
- SmartTots website:
<http://www.smarttots.org>
- U.S. FDA Website:
<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm532356.htm>

We take the FDA announcement seriously and want to ensure that we at WakeMed are providing the best care possible for our patients and their families.

This statement was reviewed by the WakeMed Raleigh Surgical Services Executive Committee and approved, February 2018.