

4. Information about sickness after surgery

Is everyone sick after an operation?

No, but there are so many different reasons for feeling or being sick that it would affect a lot of people if we didn't try to do something about it.

What makes people sick after an operation?

Lots of things. We know that just being a woman and having a gynaecological operation is more likely to make you feel sick. The type of anaesthetic, a longer operation and certain drugs, like morphine and some antibiotics, can also make you feel sick.

If morphine can make me feel sick, can't you give me something else?

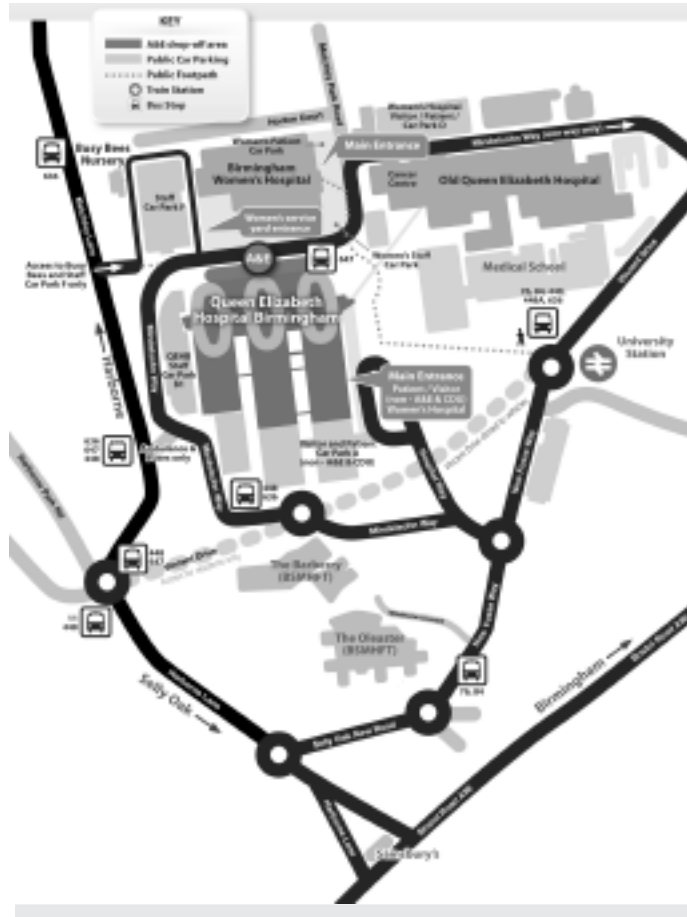
We give morphine because it is the best painkiller. But we usually give 2 other painkillers as well, (which don't make you feel sick) so that you need less morphine but still have good pain control.

Are some people more likely to be sick than others?

Yes. People who have been sick after previous operations, those who get very anxious or who suffer from travel sickness are more likely to feel or be sick.

How long will the sickness or feeling of sickness last for?

Everyone is different, but it usually settles within 24 hours.



Sickness After Surgery

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Introduction

We all have different worries about coming into hospital for an operation. For some people it may be the fear of pain, for others, it's the anxiety of being or feeling sick.

This leaflet tells you about the different ways we can try to stop you feeling sick and it explains some of the reasons for feeling or being sick. Although we can't guarantee that you won't feel or be sick, we'll do our best to prevent it happening.

What should I do if I'm worried about being sick?

Before your operation, the anaesthetist usually asks you if you've had any problems with sickness in the past. If you have, you can discuss it then. It's also a good idea to tell the nurse on the ward about your concern.

After your operation, it's important to tell the nurse if you feel sick.

How will the sickness be treated?

There are 3 ways we can try to reduce the sickness:

1. With drugs.
2. By advising you on how to move after your operation.
3. By advising you about what to eat and drink.

1. Anti-sickness drugs

During the operation, the anaesthetist usually gives you at least 2 and sometimes 3 anti-sickness drugs.

After the operation, particularly if you're having regular morphine, the anaesthetist will probably prescribe an anti-sickness drug for you to have regularly, whether or not you're feeling sick.

This is because the anaesthetic and morphine can so often make you feel sick, it's better to treat it before it starts.

Which drugs will I be given?

It's difficult to say exactly which ones you'll have, but it's likely to be Valoid. If you still feel sick, you may then have Stemetil or Zofran.

Do they have any side effects?

Valoid can sometimes make you feel a bit sleepy. Side effects from the others are rare.

How will they be given?

Immediately after your operation, they're usually put into the 'drip' in the back of your hand or given as an injection in your leg. If you feel OK, then you might have them in tablet form. They usually take about 15-20 minutes to work.

Are there any non-drug treatments I can have?

Yes - Sea Bands. They're elasticated bands that go on your wrist and are a form of acupuncture. If you don't believe in them or don't want to use them, please say so.

2. Movement

After your operation, sit up slowly and gradually. Try to avoid making any sudden movements.

Some people feel sick only once and that's for just a short while after they've got out of bed for the first time.

To try and stop this happening, sit up slowly and with the help of a nurse, get your balance on the edge of the bed before standing up, move slowly and then sit down gently.

Getting out of bed for the first time can also make some people feel a bit light-headed but this usually passes off fairly quickly.

If at any time you do feel sick, try taking some slow deep breaths.

3. Eating and drinking

Obviously what we eat and drink has an effect on being or feeling sick.

Eating and drinking AFTER your operation if you're staying in hospital. For the first 12 hours or so, you'll probably only feel like having a few sips of water. After that, we'll tell you when you can begin to eat and drink a bit more. Start off fairly slowly with a little more water and then try a small cup of tea or coffee.

If you feel OK, try some toast and then a bit later on some soup, yoghurt or ice cream. If you're still OK, you can gradually increase the amount you have each day.

If you're coming into hospital just for the day, you'll probably find that within an hour or so after your operation, you'll be ready for a glass of water or a cup of tea. But try sitting up first to see how you feel before having something to drink.

Before you go home, you need to have had a couple of pieces of toast or a sandwich and something else to drink.