

ROAD TO SAFETY

Don't Drive Under The Influence Of Anesthesia

(NAPSA)—Here's advice that could save a life—outside the hospital—the next time you or someone you know needs surgery. With today's modern medicine, even though many procedures involving anesthesia no longer require an overnight stay at a hospital, a designated driver is always needed, according to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA).

Outpatient surgery has become commonplace, enabling patients to receive anesthesia, have surgery and be released from the facility, all within a matter of hours. Regardless, persons who have a procedure requiring anesthesia are advised to make sure a friend or relative is present to drive them home.

“Driving under the influence refers to more than driving while intoxicated or high on street drugs; it can also include driving soon after receiving anesthesia,” said AANA President Wanda Wilson, CRNA, Ph.D. “The amount of time you should wait before driving after anesthesia varies depending on the drugs used, but patients should not drive no matter how ‘normal’ they feel after surgery—for their own safety, as well as the safety of other drivers on the road.”

The AANA is the professional organization for more than 90 percent of the nation's Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). As advanced practice nurses, CRNAs administer approximately 30 million anesthetics in the United States each year. CRNAs practice in every setting where anesthesia is available and are the sole anesthesia providers in more than two-thirds of all rural hospitals.



The AANA advises patients not to drive themselves home from the hospital no matter how normal they feel.

Research has been conducted to track the time it takes patients to return to their preanesthetic condition and safely operate a vehicle or heavy machinery. This research confirmed that all individuals undergoing anesthesia need a recovery period. While the studies varied in terms of which anesthetic drugs were involved, all the research demonstrated patient impairments such as the inability to judge the distance of oncoming cars and traffic signals, delayed hand- and foot-reaction times, higher attention lapses, lane deviation, excessive speed and overall lower levels of alertness. The AANA advises patients to consult with their surgeon and nurse anesthetist to determine how soon they should return to normal daily activities, including driving.

“Many surgical procedures involving anesthesia are seen as routine these days but the fact is that anesthesia, no matter how routine, involves drugs that will impair the individual's judgment,” said Wilson. “Caution should always be the rule of the day when recovering from anesthesia and surgery.”

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