



Midwest Anesthesia Associates

Seniors and Anesthesia

As a person ages, the way a person processes medications changes and his/her general metabolic process slows down. This also means that the way the body reacts to anesthesia may be different than for a younger person. The brain, in particular, may be more susceptible to certain side effects, particularly when monitored sedation or general anesthesia are used.

Anesthesia-related side effects that are more common in older people include post-operative delirium and post-operative cognitive dysfunction (POCD). With post-operative delirium, you may become confused, have memory or focus problems, or be unaware of your surroundings. This condition may come and go but usually disappears after about a week. POCD is a more serious condition that may result in long-term memory loss and/or a decreased ability to learn, concentrate, or think.

If you have heart disease, congestive heart failure, lung disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, or have had a stroke, it is very important to share this information with your surgeon and your anesthesiologist or certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). These conditions increase the risk of POCD and should be taken into account when determining the proper method and medication for anesthesia.

Remember that the anesthesia chosen for you is based on many factors, including your physical condition, the nature of the surgery, and your reactions to medications. Frank and open discussion with your anesthesia professional is the best way to minimize risks and determine the right anesthetic for you.