

## **What is malignant hyperthermia?**

Malignant hyperthermia is a rare inherited disorder in which patients may develop life-threatening reactions when exposed to inhaled anesthetics for general anesthesia. Complications include a rise in heart rate, extreme temperature elevation, muscle breakdown and changes in body chemistry which can lead to excessive bleeding and the failure of organs and other body systems. Currently, a muscle biopsy is the only accurate test for malignant hyperthermia susceptibility.

Malignant hyperthermia can occur during or after any procedure under general anesthesia and in any surgical setting from office and ambulatory centers to hospitals.

Malignant hyperthermia can be treated with dantrolene sodium if the case is identified and treatment is administered very early in the onset of the condition. Unfortunately, cases of malignant hyperthermia can result in death even if proper treatment is administered.

Patients should be assured that the occurrence of malignant hyperthermia is extremely uncommon. Surgical teams are well trained for adverse reactions that can occur during procedures.

Prior to undergoing general anesthesia for surgery, patients concerned about malignant hyperthermia should consult with their surgical team and inform their anesthesiologist of any personal or family history of malignant hyperthermia, or adverse reactions to anesthetics. Patients can also ask if a supply of dantrolene is available in the facility where surgery will take place. Anesthesiologists continue to take all steps possible to recognize and treat this rare condition.

For more information on malignant hyperthermia please contact ASA or the Malignant Hyperthermia Association of the United States. Visit the MHAUS Web site at [www.mhaus.org](http://www.mhaus.org).

(Excerpt from the Anesthesia and You section of the ASA Web site [www.asahq.org/patientEducation/anesandyou.htm](http://www.asahq.org/patientEducation/anesandyou.htm))