

# What is conscious sedation?

## (An introduction for adult patients, to be used in conjunction with sedation-specific information)

Your dentist has recommended that you have your dental treatment with the help of sedation. Sedation is when drugs are used to make you feel less anxious and more relaxed. It will make you drowsy, less aware of what is happening and with few memories of what has happened to you during your treatment. It does not make you unconscious and you will be aware of what is happening.

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Once you are sedated, the dentist may use local anaesthetic around the site of the dental treatment. Local anaesthetic as a paste is sometimes used to numb the site of the treatment. Any injections you need will then be given through this numbed area to minimise any discomfort.

Sedative drugs (medicines) can be given in a number of ways. Your dentist will decide, with you, which type is the best for your planned dental treatment.

There are different levels of sedation and several methods can be used. You may have sedation:

- by breathing in gas through a nosepiece (inhalation)
- by injection into a vein in your hand or arm (intravenous)
- by swallowing a medicine (oral)
- by placing a medicine under your tongue or into the nose (transmucosal)

Your dentist will discuss the best method to use for you and your treatment. The dentist will give you some information about the type of sedation you will be having for your treatment.

The dentist who agrees with you the plan for your treatment with sedation will give you some instructions to follow. These are important for your safe and comfortable care. For most types of sedation, you will need someone to come with you on the day of your treatment so that he or she can look after you when you go home. The dentist will confirm with you if you will need someone to act as an escort in this way. Your escort will also be given some important information about how best to look after you following your treatment under sedation.

This information is a general guide for patients having dental treatment with sedation. As part of the face-to-face discussions

with your dentist, you may be given advice that is specific to your treatment plan. This may differ in some areas to the general principles outlined here.

Before any treatment is started, the dentist will ask you to confirm your consent. This means that you understand the planned treatment and how you will receive the sedation.

If you have any questions or are unclear about having your sedation, then do not hesitate to ask your dentist.

# Inhalation sedation

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Inhalation sedation means that the sedation is given as a gas. Anxiety is reduced by breathing nitrous oxide with oxygen, given as a mixed gas. The dentist will give you the gas through a nosepiece. This will not cover your mouth.

## *What to expect*

It is usual to have two appointments. The first appointment will be for an assessment when your dental treatment under sedation will be planned and discussed with you. The dental treatment under sedation will take place at the second and subsequent appointments. If the treatment is needed as an emergency, it may be possible to have some treatment under sedation at the first appointment.

It is important that you let the dentist know your medical history and any medicines that you are taking.

If you think you may be pregnant, you need to let the dentist know. You may need to come back to have your treatment at another time. You should let your dentist know if you are breastfeeding.

The dentist will confirm whether you need to restrict what you eat or drink on the day of treatment. If you have any questions or are unclear about having your

sedation, then do not hesitate to ask your dentist.

As you receive the gas via a nosepiece, you may get a feeling of warmth throughout your body as well as some mild tingling and light-headedness. You will stay awake and in control of all your reflexes, such as coughing.

Once you are sedated with the gas, the dentist may use local analgesia (pain relief that numbs the site of the dental treatment). Local anaesthetic as a paste is sometimes used to numb the site of the treatment. Any injection that you may need can then be given through this numbed area to reduce the chance of any discomfort.

## *After the treatment*

You are unlikely to have any side effects, such as feeling sick or headache. At the end of the procedure, the dentist will give you some extra oxygen to make you feel more alert. This will speed up your recovery from the effects of the sedation.

You will spend time in the recovery area after the treatment is over. You will be checked by the dentist or an appropriate member of the dental team before you go home. It is not always necessary to have someone with you following this type of simple inhalation sedation. You may be advised not to drive a car, ride a bicycle or operate machinery for up to 2 hours following your treatment.

You will be given information relating to any local analgesia and the dental treatment you have received. The dental team will also advise you about any medicines you may need while recovering from the treatment. You will be given a telephone number of who to contact if you have any problems as a result of the treatment.

# Intravenous sedation

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Your dentist has recommended that you have intravenous sedation. This means that a sedative drug (medicine) is given to you by injection into a vein. The sedation makes you drowsy and helps reduce anxiety.

Intravenous sedation is usually given by using a single drug called midazolam. A dose of the drug is chosen for you individually. It is given by injection. This is usually into a vein in the back of your hand or in your arm through a cannula.

A cannula is a thin flexible tube. A needle is used to put the cannula in but is then removed immediately. It is normal to feel a sharp scratch when the cannula is inserted. A local anaesthetic paste or liquid can be used first to reduce the pain of the injection. Once the cannula is in the vein, the sedation drug can be given without using any more needles. The cannula remains in until the dentist has checked that you have recovered from the sedation but it will be removed before you go home.

It is usual to have at least two appointments. The first appointment will be an assessment when your dental treatment under sedation will be planned and discussed with you. The dental treatment under sedation will take place at the second and subsequent appointments. If the treatment is needed as an emergency, it may be possible to have some treatment under sedation at the

first appointment.

Your dentist and members of the dental team are trained to give sedation. They watch you closely and treat any problems that may develop. They are also required to use appropriate monitoring equipment during sedation. There will be a recovery area where you will be observed until you have made a full recovery from the sedation.

As with the administration of any medicines, there are risks associated with intravenous sedation. These might include:

- A reduction of oxygen in the blood stream due to poor breathing during sedation. You may be asked by your dentist/sedationist to take deep breaths to correct this. Your breathing and oxygen levels will be monitored throughout the procedure.
- Bruising at the site of the cannula. This may take several days to fade completely.

Very rare risks include allergic reactions to the sedative drugs that you have been given or vomiting during the procedure. Your dentist/sedationist will discuss any

concerns that you may have prior to the procedure taking place. It is important that you let the dentist know your medical history, including any medicines that you are taking. The dentist will need to know if you have ever had any problems with having either sedation or a general anaesthetic.

If you think you may be pregnant, you need to let the dentist know. You may need to come back to have your treatment at another time. You should let the dentist know if you are breastfeeding.

Your dentist will discuss with you and explain what you are able to eat and drink prior to your appointment. You will also be given this information in writing. It is important that these instructions are followed carefully.

The information provided here is a general guide for patients having dental treatment with sedation. As part of the face-to-face discussions with your dentist, you may be given advice that is specific to your treatment plan. This may differ in some areas to the general principles outlined here.

Before any treatment is started, the dentist will ask you to confirm

consent. This means that you understand the planned treatment and how you will receive the sedation.

### ***What to expect***

You will remain conscious during this kind of sedation.

You may experience a temporary loss of memory during the time that you are sedated. Many patients have no memory of the procedure at all. You may feel unsteady on your feet for some hours after the procedure. Your ability to think clearly and make judgements may be affected for the next 24 hours. You may experience some forgetfulness.

Once you are sedated, the dentist can use local analgesia (pain relief that numbs the site of the dental treatment). Local anaesthetic as a paste is sometimes used to numb the site of the treatment. Any injections that you may need can be given through this numbed area to reduce the chance of any discomfort.

You will spend some time in the recovery area following your treatment. You will be checked by the dentist or the person giving you the sedation before you can go home. You *must* be accompanied by an able-bodied adult who can take responsibility for you following your treatment. This person may need to stay with you overnight. If arrangements have not been made for someone to accompany you after treatment, you will not be able to have the sedation.

If you have any questions or are unclear about having your sedation, then do not hesitate to ask your dentist.

### ***After the treatment***

Your judgement will be affected by the drugs. This is similar to the effects of consuming alcohol. You should not drive a car, ride a bicycle or operate machinery until the following day. In some cases, this may be for as long as 24 hours. You should also not take responsibility for the care of others, use sharp implements or

cook. It would be unwise to make any irreversible decisions for up to 24 hours following your treatment. Owing to the after effects of the drugs used, care should be taken when using the internet for personal communication.

Before you are discharged, the dentist or dental nurse will give you and the adult accompanying you (escort) important information about your care. You will be given information relating to any local analgesia and the treatment you have received. The dentist will also provide details of pain relief as well as how and when to take other prescription medicines.

You will be given a telephone number of who to contact if you have any problems as a result of your treatment.

## Intravenous sedation with more than one drug

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More than one sedative medicine can be used for people having more complicated dental procedures or those with severe anxiety. Your dentist will tell you if this applies to you.

A dose of the sedative drugs will be chosen for you individually and given by injection. This is usually into a vein in the back of your hand or in your arm through a cannula.

A cannula is a thin flexible tube. A needle is used to put the cannula in but is then removed immediately. It is normal to feel a sharp scratch when the cannula is inserted. A local anaesthetic paste or liquid can be used first to reduce the pain of the injection. Once the cannula is in the vein, the sedation drugs can be given without using any more needles. The cannula remains in until the dentist has checked that you have recovered from the sedation but it will be removed before you go home.

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Your dentist and members of the dental team are trained to give sedation. They watch you closely and treat any problems that may develop. They are also required to use appropriate monitoring equipment during sedation. There will be a recovery area where you will be observed until you have made a full recovery from the sedation.

As with the administration of any medicines, there are risks associated with intravenous sedation. Sedation with more than one drug can increase the risk of complications. Risks include:

- A reduction of oxygen in the blood stream due to poor breathing during sedation. You may be asked by your dentist/sedationist to take deep breaths to correct this. Your breathing and oxygen levels will be monitored throughout the procedure.
- Bruising at the site of the cannula. This may take several days to fade completely.

Very rare risks are allergic reactions to the sedative drugs that you have been given or vomiting during the procedure. There is a small risk of you becoming more deeply

sedated than intended when having more than one sedative drug. Your dentist/sedationist will discuss any concerns that you may have prior to the procedure taking place.

It is important that you let the dentist know your medical history and any medicines that you are taking. The dentist will need to know if you have ever had any problems with having either sedation or a general anaesthetic.

If you think you may be pregnant, you should let the dentist know. You may need to come back to have your treatment at another time. You should let your dentist know if you are breastfeeding.

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