

Inhalation sedation

What is inhalation sedation?

Inhalation sedation is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide (“laughing gas”) supplied through a rubber mask which is placed only over the nose. This is rested in place and left on throughout treatment. The patient will be asked to breathe through their nose so that the gases take effect and aid relaxation. At no point will the patient be asleep and they will be monitored at all times to ensure that the level of sedation is not too deep.

Why would I need this procedure?

The use of inhalation sedation helps to reduce fear, lessen pain and improve cooperation without the need for long-acting drugs or general anaesthesia. The patient becomes relaxed and much less anxious enabling them to cope more easily with dental procedures.

Who may be suitable for this technique?

People with the following problems may benefit most from this technique:

- Nervous/anxious patients
- Those who do not respond effectively to local anaesthetic (injections in the mouth)
- Those with a strong gag reflex
- Patients requiring a difficult procedure eg multiple extractions

What are the effects of the gas?

This procedure gives a pleasant, floaty, warm, tingling sensation and a feeling of wellbeing. This means that the patient will become more confident with each visit.

The patient will be aware of everything that is being done. They will be able to speak to the dentist and cooperate with treatment.

The gas has no known interactions with other medications. The gas does not numb the teeth and therefore a local anaesthetic will still be needed.

How long do the effects last?

The great thing about this sedation technique is that the gas acts very quickly and it wears off very quickly too – a matter of 2-5 minutes.

After treatment, you or your child will be asked to breathe pure oxygen for a few minutes to clear any remaining gas from the lungs.

There are no known side effects to this procedure, however, some patients may feel tired or a bit light-headed. Some patients may also get a headache or feel nauseous, so we recommend that the patient avoids driving, cycling or any vigorous activity immediately after the procedure.

Children may go back to school but should not be left unsupervised or undertake any physical activities.

If you have any concerns about the aftereffects of sedation, please talk to your dentist at the next appointment or telephone the clinic.

Are there any circumstances in which the technique cannot be used?

- Patients who are unable to breathe through their nose including those with a heavy cold.
- Pregnant women.
- In children who are pre-cooperative for dental treatment (generally under five years).
- Untreated/complicated mental health problems.
- Patients with severe learning disabilities.
- Patients with severe chest problems.
- Patients who have had eye or middle ear surgery.

Are there any circumstances when I should cancel the appointment?

Yes – if you or your child has a heavy cold or blocked nose and is unable to breathe through the nose.

As appointments for sedation are often 60-90 minutes long, we would appreciate it if you could inform us of a cancellation at least 24 to 48 hours before the appointment. This allows us to offer the appointment to another patient.

If you have any further questions please ask your dentist.

Preparing for treatment under inhalation sedation

To prepare for treatment under inhalation sedation, please make sure you eat a light meal 1-2 hours before your appointment time and wear loose clothing and sensible shoes. Make sure you take your routine prescribed medication(s) as advised by your doctor, unless otherwise advised by your dentist.

Please do not bring children, babies or other dependants to the appointment and do not take recreational drugs for at least 48 hours before your appointment.

At your appointment

Please attend the clinic 10 minutes before your appointment and tell the receptionist you are here. If you are more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, we will not be able to see you for your treatment and your appointment will need to be rebooked.

Children must be accompanied by their parent/legal guardian and we advise that all patients go to the toilet before your appointment time.

At the end of your appointment you will be required to stay in the surgery until we are sure it is safe for you to leave the clinic.

After your appointment

After your appointment you may take any routine medication(s) as normal – unless advised by your dentist. We do not recommend that you drive a car, ride a bicycle or operate machinery for two hours after the procedure, however if you intend to leave by public transport, you do not necessarily need an escort. If you are advised to bring an escort then you should go straight home in the presence of a responsible adult.

Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact: 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Michelle Gavagan, Senior Dental Officer

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
DAS

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