

Dental treatment for children using inhalation sedation

This leaflet explains more about inhalation sedation for your child's dental treatment, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives, and what you and your child can expect when you come to hospital.

My child is scared of having dental treatment – is there anything that can help?

Some people, including children, feel worried about going to the dentist and having treatment. One way we can help your child feel less nervous or scared is by giving them 'inhalation sedation' which is sometimes called 'happy air' or 'laughing gas', and uses a mixture of the gases oxygen and nitrous oxide. We usually offer this to children from around the age of 4 or 5.

Your child will be conscious (awake) the whole time and will be able to talk to you and the dentist. This should help with any worries they may have, and they should be able to cope with treatment more easily.

Can inhalation sedation help with anything else?

Yes. It can help if your child tends to gag during treatment. It can also help if they are afraid of injections.

What happens when my child is given inhalation sedation?

We will switch on the inhalation sedation and place a small mask over your child's nose so they can breathe a mixture of nitrous oxide

and oxygen. After a few minutes your child should start to feel more relaxed. Other typical reactions include feeling giggly, having a tingling feeling in the fingers and/or toes, a warm sensation all over the body, and a feeling of well-being or floating.

The dentist and dental nurse will help put your child at ease by talking softly and calmly throughout the treatment. When the dental treatment is finished, the dentist will turn off the nitrous oxide and your child will breathe oxygen until the sedative effects wear off.

Your child may still need to have local anaesthetic (injection) as part of the treatment, but this will be carried out once they are sedated.

Are there any risks with inhalation sedation?

Inhalation sedation is an extremely safe technique which has no health risks for patient use. Your child may not be completely sedated if for some reason they cannot breathe easily through their (eg they have a cold). Very rarely, your child may feel sick or vomit, so we advise that they have only a light meal up to one hour before their appointment. Your child may not like wearing the mask. We can help by showing your child the mask and getting them to practise wearing it beforehand. Very rarely, your child may feel dizzy, but this goes away after they stop inhaling the gas.

My child has a heavy cold. Can they still have inhalation sedation?

No. If your child has a heavy cold they will not be able to breathe through their nose and the sedation will not work. Please call the clinic to rearrange the appointment.

Are there any other types of sedation?

The inhalation method of sedation may not be right for your child. This can depend on the age of the child and how well they can understand and cooperate with the procedure. Sometimes we only realise this after we have attempted inhalation sedation and not been successful. A deeper form of sedation, given into a vein, may be necessary, or a general anaesthetic. You can talk to your dentist about this.

Why do I need to sign a consent form?

It is important for you to be included in decisions about your child's care and treatment. If you decide your child should have sedation, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The consent form confirms your agreement to the treatment. It also provides an opportunity for you to ask any questions and make sure you understand exactly what the procedure involves.

Please remember, inhalation sedation is safe but there are a few rules to follow:

Before the visit

- Encourage your child to practise breathing through their nose with their mouth open, for 10 minutes per day for three or four days before the appointment.
- Do not bring any other children with you to the appointment, as your child will need your full, undivided attention. If you do bring other children, the appointment may be cancelled.
- Your child can eat a light meal and drink up to one hour before treatment.
- At each appointment a parent/legal guardian will need to attend.
- If you or your daughter is pregnant, or you think either of you could be, please let your dentist know. There is a chance that nitrous oxide could harm an unborn child.

After the visit

- Follow any given mouth care advice.
- Your dentist will advise you if your child can return to school on the same day.
- Your child should not play any sport for the rest of the day.
- At home, your child should be supervised by a responsible adult for the rest of the day.
- Your child can resume normal activities the following day.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about inhalation sedation or if you want to cancel or rearrange a sedation appointment, please contact the paediatric dental team on **020 7188 7947** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics, available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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