

# Having inhalation sedation for your dental treatment

**This aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having inhalation sedation for your dental treatment. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives to the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a dentist or dental nurse.**

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## What is inhalation sedation?

Inhalation sedation involves breathing a gas that relaxes you and makes you feel sleepy during your treatment (a sedative).

Once you are sedated, you will be given a local anaesthetic injection which will numb your mouth. This is not a general anaesthetic that puts you to sleep. However, many people do not remember much about their treatment.

You might find the leaflet **Sedation options for your dental treatment** helpful. It explains the different anaesthetic and pain relief options available for your dental treatment. If you do not have one, please ask your dentist or nurse for a copy.

## What are the benefits – why should I have sedation?

Sedation by breathing a sedative gas will help you cope with dental treatment and reduce your anxiety. Even people who do not feel anxious about dental treatment choose to have sedation for uncomfortable procedures such as extractions.

## What are the risks?

Inhalation sedation is very safe. You may feel dizzy or light-headed at the end of treatment but this should only last a few minutes. We will give you pure oxygen to breath at the end of the treatment to help prevent this.

Your dentist will talk to you in more detail about the risks of inhalation sedation before you sign the consent form. Please ask questions if you are uncertain.

## Asking for your consent

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you agree to have the procedure and understand what it involves.

## Are there any alternatives?

The alternatives to this type of sedation are intravenous sedation, a local anaesthetic (with no sedation) or a general anaesthetic.

**Intravenous sedation** involves giving you an injection of a sedative drug through a plastic tube into a vein in your arm or hand.

Treatment under a **local anaesthetic** will involve an injection into the gum so that there will be no pain but you will be conscious during treatment.

A **general anaesthetic** is medicine that causes you to be temporarily unconscious (asleep), so you do not feel anything during the procedure. It is riskier and therefore is reserved for people who are unable to cope with treatment under sedation due to disability or who need a great deal of treatment.

## How can I prepare for my appointment?

Please arrive for your appointment on time as we may not be able to see you if you arrive late. It is not necessary to stop eating (fast) before sedation and we recommend that you have a light meal before your appointment.

Your medicines will be reviewed before you come in for the procedure, and you will be told if you need to stop any of them temporarily. Unless you are advised otherwise, please continue to take your routine medicines as usual. Please let your dentist or nurse know if you have allergies to any medicines.

It is not always necessary to bring someone with you to your appointment. Your dentist will discuss this with you at your assessment appointment. Many people like to bring a friend with them for their first sedation appointment. Please do not bring any children or babies to hospital with you as we do not have a suitable space for them to wait.

If you develop a cold or feel unwell before your treatment or think you might be pregnant, please call us for advice.

## **What happens during the sedation?**

The dentist will explain the planned treatment and check that you understand what will happen. The dental nurse will take your blood pressure.

You will be asked to lie back in the dental chair and we will give you the mask to place over your nose. The dentist will give you the sedative gas slowly and talk to you. During sedation the dental team will monitor your breathing and how relaxed you are.

## **Will I feel any pain?**

Your dentist will give you an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area where you will be having treatment. You might feel a slight stinging sensation while the local anaesthetic is being given but then the area should feel numb. We will do our best to make sure you feel as comfortable as possible during the procedure. Please let us know if you feel any discomfort.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

At the end of treatment we will walk you to the recovery area. You may still feel sleepy and some people are clumsy and forgetful. For these reasons you will not be able to leave until you have been checked by the dentist or dental nurse. Most people spend about 10 minutes in recovery.

## What do I need to do after I go home?

It is important that you follow the advice given below for your safety.

For two hours after your treatment you should not:

- drive any vehicle or ride a bicycle
- operate any machinery, including domestic appliances
- attempt to cook, use sharp utensils or pour hot or boiling liquids
- make any important decisions or sign any contracts
- be responsible for children or other dependants.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

If you need a follow-up appointment, your dentist or dental nurse will let you know. You will either be given another appointment by the reception team or placed on the appropriate waiting list and sent a letter when an appointment is available.

## Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about having sedation for your dental treatment, please contact the **Department of Sedation and Special Care Dentistry**  
**t:** 020 7188 6066 (9am–4.30pm, Monday–Friday).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)

For information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to use the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, and St Thomas' Hospital.

**t:** 020 7188 3416      **e:** [kic@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:kic@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 2049/VER3**

Date published: September 2015

Review date: September 2018

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