

Sedation options for your dental treatment

This information sheet has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about having conscious sedation. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives 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 nurse caring for you.

The Department of Sedation and Special Care Dentistry specialises in treating anxious patients and other people who have difficulty accessing dental care. There is no need to be embarrassed about being frightened of dentistry.

What is conscious sedation?

Conscious sedation techniques are a way of making anxious people feel more relaxed about receiving dental care. There are several techniques to help you overcome your fears and anxieties. Not all are suitable for everyone. The dentist who sees you at your assessment appointment will discuss the different options and help you decide which is best for you.

What treatment options are available?

Local anaesthesia

This is an injection into your gum. It numbs the part of your mouth being treated, so you do not feel any pain.

The dentist will put a numbing cream on your gum for a couple of minutes, before the injection. This makes it much more comfortable and many patients don't realise an injection has been placed. It can be used on its own or with any of the conscious sedation methods listed below.

Relative analgesia (gas and air)

This involves breathing a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide through a special nosepiece. It gives you a pleasant, relaxed feeling. The dental team will talk to you at the same time in a calm and reassuring way. Most people feel warm, floaty and tingly.

At the end of the procedure you will be given pure oxygen for a couple of minutes and you will recover very quickly. There are no after-effects and most people can drive or return to work the same day.

This technique is good for mildly to moderately anxious people who are able to breathe through their nose.

Intravenous sedation

This involves giving you a sedative medicine through a vein in your arm or hand. The sedative makes you feel deeply relaxed. You will be able to talk and cooperate with your dental team, but most people cannot remember much about their treatment. Before the sedation, your blood pressure will be measured and during treatment your breathing and pulse will be monitored. Some people take a little time to recover and you will need to stay in the department until you are able to walk by yourself. It is important that you have someone with you who can take you home and stay with you for the rest of the day.

Intranasal conscious sedation

This involves a squirt of a concentrated form of a sedative medicine up your nose. It can sting a little and may make you sneeze. Once you are relaxed, we may need to give you more medicine, through a vein in your arm or hand. This will produce a deeper sedation. We use this method for people who are needle phobic (extremely scared of injections) and for people with special needs who cannot stay still for intravenous conscious sedation.

Oral sedation

This involves taking a drink containing a sedative. Once you are relaxed, we may need to give you more medicine, through a vein in your arm or hand. This will produce a deeper sedation. We do not recommend oral sedation for most patients, as the time it takes for the sedation to start working can be very long.

What are the benefits of sedation?

Conscious sedation will help you cope with dental treatment and lower your anxiety. Even people who do not feel anxious about dental treatment choose to have conscious sedation for uncomfortable procedures such as extractions (having teeth removed).

What are the risks?

Conscious sedation using gas and air 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 breathe at the end of treatment to help prevent this.

Intravenous sedation and intranasal sedation can slow down your breathing. We overcome this by monitoring you carefully, so we can give you oxygen if you need it.

You may have some bruising to your hand or arm after the injection, but this should heal up in a few days.

Are there any other alternatives?

The alternatives to conscious sedation are a local anaesthetic on its own or a general anaesthetic. Treatment using a local anaesthetic involves giving you an injection into your gum. This means that you will not feel any pain, but will be fully awake and aware of the dental experience.

A general anaesthetic is medicine that causes you to be temporarily unconscious, so you do not feel anything during the procedure.

With so many different conscious sedation techniques available, very few people need a general anaesthetic. It is usually reserved for people who are unable to cooperate with dental care due to their disabilities or people who need a great deal of dental work and are dental phobic. Before you can have a general anaesthetic you will need to have a separate assessment by the dentist and possibly the anaesthetist.

If you want more information on the above, please see our leaflet **Having an anaesthetic**. If you do not have a copy, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Giving my consent (permission)

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

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about conscious sedation, please call the **Department of Sedation and Special Care Dentistry** on 020 7188 6066 (9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday).

We are located on the 26th Floor, Guy's Tower, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London SE1 9RT.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit 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

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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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