Having conscious sedation when you need a central venous access device

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having conscious sedation for central line placement. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of 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 doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is conscious sedation?
Conscious sedation involves giving a sedative drug through a vein in the arm or hand. The sedative drug will help you relax and make you feel sleepy during the procedure. It is not a general anaesthetic. It will however, help reduce anxiety and fear. Many patients will not remember the treatment or procedure.

Once the conscious sedation is working, a local anaesthetic will be administered under the skin where the central line will be put in. Central line devices include acute central lines, femoral lines, skin-tunnelled and peripherally inserted central line catheters. More information about the central line insertion will be discussed with you during your consultation.

Do I need sedation?
Generally, patients having a central line put in do not need sedation. Planned central line insertion will be explained to you at least a few days before the procedure. We will organise for you to meet the central venous access service (CVAD) staff before the actual procedure. This will help you and nurses involved to prepare and carefully plan the insertion. We will assess you at this time if you require any sedation.

Conscious sedation will be offered to those who are very anxious or with needle phobia or with repeated central line insertions.

What are the benefits of having conscious sedation?
Conscious sedation will help reduce fear and anxiety. Some patients may prefer not to remember the procedure.

What are the risks?
The sedation drug will cause your breathing to slow down. If you have a pre-existing lung condition, please let us know. You will be monitored closely throughout the procedure to make sure you have enough oxygen. You will be attached to an oxygen saturation monitor during the procedure. Sometimes, it may be necessary to give you oxygen through a mask. Very rarely, some patients may have unusual reaction to the sedative drug. We will discuss this with you in detail.
Do I need to prepare for the sedation?
Yes. If you require conscious sedation, you need to have an escort with you or an escort to pick you up after the procedure. This person should be a responsible adult who can stay with you after the treatment and the next 12 hours after the sedation. If you do not have an escort with you, we have to cancel the procedure or admit you to the hospital for one night. You should not drive or go home on your own on a public transport. This is for your own safety. If you are unable to comply with the escort policy, please discuss this with the CVAD team or with your doctor before your scheduled appointment.

You do not have to fast (not eat) before having sedation. We recommend that you have a light meal and encourage you to take your regular medications. We will give you further instructions if you are on blood thinning medications.

You should not do any of the following until the day after you have had sedation:
• drive
• operate machinery including domestic appliances
• drink alcohol
• make important decisions or sign important documents.

Please do come on time for your appointment. We run a list and if you are late we may not be able to do the sedation and the CVAD insertion.

What happens during sedation?
We will take your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen saturation. You then be asked to lie on a bed and a small plastic tube (cannula) will be inserted in your hand or arm. We then give the sedation slowly through the cannula and encourage you to relax. We will monitor your breathing and your oxygen saturation throughout the procedure.

You will feel some stinging when the local anaesthetic is given. The stinging normally does not last long and the area should feel numb. We will do our best to keep you comfortable during the procedure.

Asking for your consent
We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you agree to have the procedure and the sedation and understand what it involves. You should receive the leaflet, Helping you decide: our consent policy, which gives you more information. If you do not, please ask us for one.

Are there any alternatives?
For central line insertion, we can only offer intravenous conscious sedation or no sedation at all. If you require general anaesthetic, you will be referred to a different team or department who will be able to carry out the procedure safely.
Who to contact for more information?

Any issues or concerns about conscious sedation, please contact the medical team looking after you or the CVAD service on 020 7188 5885 from 9am to 5pm (Monday to Friday).

Useful contacts

PALS - To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Ask a member of staff to direct you to PALS or:
  t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
  t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s
  e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC) - For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas’ Hospital.
  t: 020 7188 3416
  e: kic@gstt.nhs.uk

Language support services - If you need an interpreter or information about the care you are receiving in the language or format of your choice, please get in touch using the following contact details.
  t: 020 7188 8815
  fax: 020 7188 5953
  e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Direct - Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.
  t: 0845 4647
  w: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk