

Inhalation sedation

Parents or those with parental
responsibility for children and young
people aged under 16 years



What is inhalation sedation?

The child in your care may require dental treatment under inhalation sedation. This will help them feel less anxious, slightly drowsy and more relaxed for the dental treatment. Inhalation sedation does not make your child unconscious.

They will remain awake but may feel warm and detached from the clinical setting. Your child's memory of the treatment afterwards may be slightly reduced.

Inhalation sedation means that your child will breathe a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen from a nosepiece placed on their nose. This will have a relaxing effect.

Benefits and risks of inhalation sedation

Inhalation sedation is used to reduce anxiety and fear of dental treatment. This

makes your child more co-operative. This is particularly helpful if your child is having a longer, uncomfortable or more complicated procedure. It is a widely used technique.

The dentist and members of the dental team are trained to give sedation. They watch your child closely and treat any problems that may develop. The nitrous oxide is completely breathed out of the body within 30 minutes of the end of the treatment. This means that your child can recover very quickly from this type of sedation.

The dentist will give your child some oxygen at the end of the sedation to help prevent them feeling a bit sick or having a headache.

Your child will be asked to wait until the dentist has checked that they have fully recovered from the sedation. Your child will not be allowed to go home with you until the dentist has done this.

What to expect

It is usual to have two or more appointments. At the first appointment (assessment), the dentist will take a full dental history of your child. Various methods of providing the dental treatment with or without sedation will be explained. Other than in an emergency, the treatment will take place at the second or subsequent appointments.

If it is agreed that dental treatment with inhalation sedation is the best way to treat your child, then the dentist will confirm your child's medical history. If further information is required, your child's general medical practitioner (GP) or specialist will be contacted.

How to prepare your child

Before the treatment, your child can eat normally, but with only a light meal being taken up to two hours before the treatment. Please give your child any

routine medicines as normal. Any medicines or inhalers that they may need should be brought to the dental treatment appointment.

Written consent will be required from a parent or carer before any treatment can be given to your child. If you have agreed and signed the consent form at the assessment appointment, and you are then unable to attend on the day of the treatment, your child must be accompanied by a responsible adult (over 18 years of age).

Your child should wear loose, comfortable clothing. No valuables should be brought to the appointment.

If your child is unwell on the day with cold or flu symptoms or any contagious illness, please contact the dentist for advice. The appointment may need to be rearranged.

Please avoid bringing other children with you on the day of treatment.

What will happen during the sedation?

During the procedure, your child will breathe the nitrous oxide and oxygen through a nosepiece on their nose. They may feel warm with tingly fingers and toes. Once your child is sedated and feels drowsy and relaxed, the dentist can use local analgesia (pain relief that numbs the site of the dental treatment). Local anaesthetic as a paste is sometimes used to numb the site of the treatment. Any injections that your child may need can then be given through this numbed area to reduce the chance of any discomfort.

When the dental treatment is completed, the nitrous oxide mixture will be stopped and replaced with oxygen. The nosepiece will be taken off, and your child will be sat up in the dentist's chair and will continue to recover fully for a few minutes. The dentist or a member of the dental team will monitor your child during recovery.

Your child will be able to leave the dental hospital once they have fully recovered, are alert, and not feeling dizzy. This usually takes about 30 minutes after the treatment has ended. Your child will be checked by the dentist before being allowed to go home.

Your child may not participate in organised or active sports for the rest of the day but may be able to return to school. The dentist will discuss this with you.

Your child can eat and drink normally after the treatment, but care should be taken if areas of the mouth are still numb to avoid biting the lip, cheek or tongue. You will be given information relating to any local analgesia and the treatment your child has received. The dentist will explain which pain relief medicines your child may have while recovering and the local analgesia wears off.

You will be given a telephone number of who to contact in case of any concerns.

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death.

For support in stopping smoking contact NHS

Smokefree on
0300 123 1044.

Please ask at reception
if you require this
information in a different
language or format.

Contact us:

Monday to Friday,

8:30 am - 4:30pm

T: 0117 374 6647

Emergency out of hours

NHS 111