



# Patient Information Leaflet

## Nitrous Oxide Sedation

Cork University Dental School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain inhalation sedation and it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

### **What is inhalation sedation?**

Inhalation sedation is a technique that uses a gas called nitrous oxide (often called 'laughing gas') to help you to cope with fear and anxiety during dental treatment. You breathe the gas through a small mask that sits over your nose. The nitrous oxide is mixed with oxygen and the amount used is very unlikely to make you unconscious. This way of helping you to relax during treatment can help you to avoid the need for intravenous sedation or a general anaesthetic.

### **Who can be sedated?**

This form of sedation is recommended for both adults and children. For successful inhalation sedation, you must be able to breathe comfortably through your nose. You must also be able to understand and co-operate with the sedation. Inhalation sedation can be very helpful for patients with special needs and also for people who tend to gag a lot during dental treatment.

### **Is inhalation sedation safe?**

It is not suitable for everybody but your dentist will check carefully to make sure that you can have sedation safely. Inhalation sedation is a very safe way of providing sedation because you breathe a high level of oxygen all the way through your treatment - at least 30% oxygen is mixed with the nitrous oxide and the air around us contains only 21%.

### **What will happen at my appointment?**

Before we start your treatment, we will usually check your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level. These measurements may not all be necessary in children. Your oxygen level will be checked continuously during your sedation. This is done by placing a small clip over one of your fingertips. You will then start to breathe pure oxygen through a small mask over your nose. The nitrous oxide gas is added gradually to the oxygen. We will watch you carefully and begin treatment only when you are fully relaxed. You will not be asleep but you will be drowsy. You may or may not remember the treatment later on. We will keep you in the surgery after your treatment until we are sure you are ready to go home.

### **Will my treatment change because of the sedation?**

No. Once you are relaxed, your treatment will be exactly the same. You are still likely to need injections to make your mouth numb. Inhalation sedation does help to relieve pain as well as anxiety so injections will be more comfortable.

**Please see the other side of this leaflet for instructions about what you must do before and after your sedation appointment.**

## Instructions for Patients having Treatment under Inhalation Sedation

It is **essential** to follow these instructions.

If you **don't**, your treatment will be **cancelled**.

### Before your appointment:

1. Do not eat or drink in the two hours before your appointment.
2. Before the two-hour fasting period you should have a light meal. For example, toast and tea, coffee or fruit juice.
3. Do not drink alcohol or take any recreational drugs in the 24 hours before your appointment. These may be dangerous because they affect how you react to the sedation.
4. You **must** bring a responsible adult with you to your appointment. This person must meet our staff before your treatment and take you home afterwards. They must not have any other people (adults or children) to care for during this time.
5. If you take any regular medications, you should take them at your usual times unless your dentist has told you not to.
6. If you develop any illness, especially any difficulty breathing through your nose, you should let us know immediately as we may have to change your appointment.
7. Wear loose, comfortable clothes for your appointment.
8. You must remove all nail varnish and false nails before your appointment.

### After your appointment:

1. You should travel home by car rather than by public transport (but you must not drive yourself).
2. You must have a responsible adult to care for you during the first 24 hours after your treatment.
3. For **24 hours** after your appointment you **must not** –
  - drive any vehicle
  - operate any machinery
  - use any domestic appliance
  - return to work
  - make any important decisions
  - sign any legal documents
  - be responsible for anyone else (adult or child)

The effects of inhalation sedation generally wear off within minutes of your treatment being completed. It is still important to follow the instructions above.

If you have any problems or worries after your appointment you should contact us immediately at 021 – 4545100 for advice and help.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>