

Sedation - Nitrous oxide

- Nitrous oxide is an anaesthetic gas. It can be given to your child to breathe during a procedure to help reduce any discomfort they have and to help them to feel calm. It has been safely used for patients of many ages in dental clinics, during child birth and in Emergency Departments for several years. It is often referred to as 'laughing gas'.



Before the procedure

Nitrous oxide helps most children feel drowsy and relaxed within a few minutes. In most cases, using it means a necessary procedure can be completed with minimal discomfort or distress to your child.

It will involve a specially trained doctor or nurse putting a mask directly onto your child's face which will cover their nose and mouth. This can be a little frightening, especially for younger children. However, once the gas takes effect, most children do not mind it being there. It can be useful to let the child see and touch the mask or practice breathing with the mask before the gas is turned on. Your child may also like to choose a smell to be put inside the mask (e.g. chocolate essence).

It is important that your child has had nothing to eat or drink for at least two hours before they are given nitrous oxide. This helps reduce the chance of them having a large vomit while they are drowsy.

During the procedure

During the procedure your child will not be "anaesthetised." Your child will still be awake and be able to breathe normally, continue to talk and interact with others or remain quiet.

After the procedure

After the procedure is finished, the nitrous oxide will be turned off and your child will be given pure oxygen to breathe through the same mask for two to three minutes. This helps to clear the gas from the body. Most children feel back to normal within 10 minutes and may not remember parts of the procedure.

It is important that:

- your child stays in hospital or in their bed until a doctor or nurse says its safe move about
- balance and coordination can be affected for short period of time, please avoid sporting activities, playgrounds, driving or using mechanical equipment for remainder of the day
- outpatients are to be accompanied home by a responsible adult.

Key points to remember

- It is very important that you ask a doctor or nurse any questions you may have about nitrous oxide before you give your consent.
- Make sure you understand the reasons for your child having nitrous oxide and the possible risks involved.
- Feel free to ask questions before, during and after the procedure if you have any.

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