

Intranasal (IN) Sedation for Dental Treatment

Intranasal sedation is only offered to support intravenous sedation: this leaflet is only to discuss this type of sedation.

You will be given a separate set of instructions about sedation in addition to this leaflet.

What is intranasal (IN) sedation?

Intranasal sedation is sedation given by spraying a sedative into a person's nose. It is a safe and effective method of treating patients who are nervous or frightened about dental treatment and who are anxious of the placement of cannulas (small plastic tubes placed in the hand or arm with a needle). It is also helpful for patients with special care needs, such as those with severe learning disabilities and movement disorders, who may otherwise be unable to cope with dental treatment.

Intranasal sedation is used alongside intravenous (IV) sedation.

What does IN & IV sedation involve?

This type of sedation involves a fine spray of a sedative drug called Midazolam into a person's nose. It can take 5-10 minutes for the effects of the drug to work. It usually relaxes the patient and may make them feel drowsy. Once the sedative drug has taken effect, a cannula (small plastic tube) is inserted into a vein using a small needle. The needle is then removed with the plastic tube staying in place for the duration of the visit. Within reason, more of the same sedative drug can then be given if needed.

The patient will remain conscious throughout the procedure, but the drug causes temporary amnesia (loss of memory for about an hour). Although this varies from person to person, many people do not remember having their treatment. Due to the working time of sedation, many patients need to have treatment carried out over several appointments.

What are the benefits of IN sedation?

IN sedation can help people accept treatment by relaxing them enough to allow a cannula to be placed. This means further IV sedation can be provided if needed.

What are the risks of IN and IV sedation?

Sometimes IN sedation can sting inside the nose, so it is mixed with a numbing agent. This can also make some people sneeze. Sometimes people get a small nosebleed.

IN and IV sedation can slow down a person's breathing. We monitor this closely and can easily give the patient extra oxygen if necessary.

Occasionally, there may be some bruising around the area where the cannula is inserted. Sedation may not be successful for a small number of patients. If this is the case, the procedure may be stopped, and the treatment plan will be reviewed.

Small amounts of sedative drugs may be secreted in breast milk, but these levels are very small and unlikely to affect a healthy term baby. As a cautionary measure, nursing mothers should avoid breast-feeding for 24 hours after sedation.

What are the alternatives to sedation?

The alternatives to IN & IV sedation are to have treatment with local anaesthesia (LA), inhalation sedation, oral sedation, and general anaesthesia (GA).

Treatment under LA alone (without sedation) will involve an injection into the person's gum so that there will be no pain, but the patient will still be fully aware of the dental experience.

Inhalation sedation involves breathing in a mixture of gases (nitrous oxide and oxygen) through the nose to relax a patient. This requires a certain level of understanding from the patient to ensure the gas is breathed in and out properly.

Oral sedation can be given instead of IN sedation to allow placement of the cannula for IV sedation. This involves the patient drinking some of the sedative drug instead of a nasal spray. Sometimes the recovery from oral sedation is much slower.

General anaesthetic involves 'going to sleep' (being fully unconscious) for treatment in an operating theatre.

Individual suitability for any of these approaches varies from patient to patient, and from one treatment requirement to another. This is not possible for every type of treatment that can be completed with sedation or local anaesthesia: some treatments cannot normally be offered under general anaesthesia such as root canal treatment or simple fillings.

Off licence medication use

Intra-nasal sedation with Midazolam is an 'Unlicensed' medicine. This means there is not a licensed form of this medication for intranasal use. This has been especially formulated to be used by this route. It is being used in a different way, by a different route or for a different reason to its licenced form. Dentists and doctors are allowed to use medicines in this way when they feel it is suitable, safe and likely to be effective. It does mean that the medicine may not have been studied for use in this way in the same way as other medicines for other patient groups.

Contact Details

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