



AFRAID TO GO TO THE DENTIST?

Sedation dental care makes going to the dentist almost like you never went

Q&A WITH BARRY JASON, DDS

Dental sedation therapy can provide apprehension-free, pain-free, and memory-free care for several hours if administered properly

Patient: *I am an otherwise intelligent, rational, and normally functional adult, BUT, I am dreadfully afraid of the dentist, and put off going – even though I know I should. What can I do?*

Dr. Jason: *You are not alone. Almost 50% of all American adults avoid going to the dentist due to fear and apprehension, unless driven there by pain or emergency. However, advances in pharmacological therapy such as conscious sedation drugs have greatly improved the ability to provide the key to make going to the dentist almost seem like you never went.*

Patient: *What is involved in undergoing conscious sedation care?*

Dr. J: *Well, first you should set up a consultation with the office that can provide the dental care using con-*

scious sedation. Often, patients who are very nervous can just be shown around the facilities and meet the dentist. This can be a non-traumatic visit to allow the patient to feel comfortable and see how much the dentist and staff understand and care about their concerns. Frequently, the patient may allow the dentist to look into their mouth without probing to get an idea of what needs to be done. Then once the patient feels more at ease, it is suggested that they have x-rays taken or set up an appointment for them to be taken. For those who are "gaggers" it is often possible to arrange for x-rays to be taken during the first sedation session instead of the initial consultation, when for almost everyone the gag reflex is eliminated.

Patient: *I have such bad memories of previous dental experiences. I*

don't want to go through that again!

Dr. J: *Both oral and I.V. conscious sedation medications have significant effects that produce the following: lack of fear and apprehension, calming effects, increase in pain threshold (meaning less responsive to uncomfortable stimuli) and most importantly, little or no memory of the sedation dental treatment session. Patients are not afraid, and are not aware that they are "numbed" by dental anesthetic during these sessions.*

Patient: *I am concerned about how many visits I will need to take care of all my dental needs. I would like to get it over as quickly as possible. How long will it take?*

Dr. J: *Fortunately, dental sedation therapy can provide apprehension-free, pain-free, and memory-free care for several hours if administered properly over time, which allows the dentist to work on a relaxed, sedated patient. Often this results in appointments that last 2-5 hours, which without sedation might have taken 4-8 visits to be performed. The end result is that a se-*

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dated dental patient may be able to complete treatment in as little as one to four visits that would otherwise have taken four to fifteen sessions.

Patient: I feel embarrassed to discuss my fears and the degree of my dental problems. I don't want to be lectured or admonished.

Dr. J: An experienced sedation dental office – both staff and more importantly the dentist – should never make you feel that you are the cause of the problem. Their training and compassion allows them to understand the inherent fear that so many people like you have about dental treatment. They will NEVER make you feel that it is your fault. They are familiar with patients just like you and will bend over backwards to make you feel comfortable in as stress-free an environment as possible. Please believe that you are not alone, and that you are NOT the worst patient the dentist has ever seen. If you take this first step – make and keep the initial ap-

pointment – you have gotten over the main hurdle. Once you are there, you are to be congratulated on your initiative. You have recognized that you need and want help, and soon you will understand that sedation dental care will be the means to getting you back to a healthy, functional, and attractive smile.

Patient: How safe is conscious sedation care?

Dr. J: Both oral and I.V. sedation in New York State requires that the dentist and staff have training in these procedures; dentists must attain certification. All patients are carefully monitored for pulse, pulse oxygenation, and blood pressure. All I.V. sedation cases and many oral sedation cases are also monitored by E.K.G. Dosages, medications, and medical history are carefully reviewed. Patients should be aware that this is a proven safe and reliable drug-administered therapy that is properly applied by a certified practitioner.

Patient: What type of sedation medications will I be taking?

Dr. J: Most sedation dentists will provide a pill for the night before to allow a good night's rest without worry. This is usually valium or something similar. Then on the treatment day patients are usually given another pill or two to take an hour before the appointment. Some one must drive them and be available to pick them up upon completion of that day's care. Once undergoing sedation patients are not to drive, operate any machines, cook, or care for children since they may be sleepy and doze throughout the day. Some patients, after arriving at the dentist, are given additional medications such as pills or liquids if the sedation will be just oral, or if they are undergoing intravenous sedation an I.V. line will be started and appropriate drugs will be introduced. In both cases the patient is calm, relaxed, fear-free and will remember little or nothing of the dental procedures performed.

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