



DENTISTRY IN A DAY

What We Can Accomplish With **Conscious Sedation**

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Wouldn't it be great for all of you so very busy in your daily lives, or for those of you who are apprehensive about dental care, if you could just send your mouths over to the dentist and forget the rest? That would be amazing – but it just isn't reality.

However, there is a next best scenario. By using pharmaceutically proven and safe sedative drugs, today it is possible to make going to the dentist almost like not being there! This can be done using either I.V. or oral conscious sedation, or a combination of both. Though the means may differ between dentists that are state certified, the effect is to put you in a sleep-like state where you have no fear, anxiety, or pain – and little or no memory of the hours spent in the treatment room. Conscious sedation is a great option for people who have severe gag response, anxiety about dental visits, difficulty getting numb, time constraints, complex dental issues, or oppose general anesthesia.

The drugs that are most commonly used for oral sedation are benzodiazepines. While not used for the actual sedation, they are very often used the night before the visit to relax the patients and allow them a restful, unstressed night's sleep. On the day of the visit many sedation dentists will provide a small blue pill called triazolam, also a

benzodiazepine (brand name Halcion), to take about an hour before. Its primary effect is to sedate for a few hours, reduce fear and anxiety, and create an amnestic event that most patients will report left them with little or no memory of the treatment session.

In addition, some cases include the administration of a safe dose of liquid sedative as well – Hydroxyzine. For intra-venous (I.V.) sedation the dentist may use several different drugs; common ones may include fentanyl or midazolam. Given properly and monitored by a pulse oximeter, blood pressure, and in many cases E.K.G. machines, these drugs have been proven very safe. Depending on your body size, weight, medical condition and other medications presently being taken, dosages will differ from individual to individual.

Once you are comfortably sedated, you are carefully monitored by staff and medical equipment.

Multiple teeth and gum areas can be worked on during this prolonged session. What would have taken many visits can often be accomplished that same day (there are certain situations when more than one visit is needed, but for the most part the number of sessions is 50-80% less with sedation).

Treatments that can be done under conscious sedation include cosmetically tooth-shaded and bonded fillings, root canal therapy, periodontal (gum) therapy, tooth removal and replacement, chair side laminates, and cosmetic bonding. Even implants can be placed and activated with either temporary teeth or by modifying existing dentures. Dental injections can be given virtually painlessly under sedation, especially in conjunction with prior application of topical aesthetic, and also where available, via the use of a computerized sin-

gle tooth anesthetic machine called the S.T.A. unit that can numb a single tooth without feeling profoundly numb in unnecessary areas.

Recovery time after a procedure can also vary. Most patients are taken home and sleep for several more hours. Virtually every patient feels refreshed and ready for the next day upon a full night's sleep following the procedures. Of course, depending on the dental services performed during sedation, patients may expect to be sore or slightly uncomfortable, especially if they have had surgery or extractions. But most patients with routine dental procedures recover without discomfort, and your dentist will prescribe appropriate pain medication and/or antibiotics as needed.

All of the above can be planned under the supervision of a dentist experienced in dental rehabilitation and dental sedation. There is, of course, the need for an initial meeting where a comprehensive examination, health issues, necessary x-rays, and an agreed upon plan of care is determined.

Though these treatment sessions are generally much longer, they are made as comfortable as possible using cushioned chair padding and head phones. Many offices also utilize mouth props and intra-oral lighting to allow clear and simple access to treatment areas. One such device is the isolite, which was invented by a dentist, and props, lights up, and suctions away saliva and moisture at the same time.

All told, state-of-the-art advances in dental treatment can greatly reduce the number of times you may need to visit the dentist for these procedures – and using sedation care can make it seem like you were not even there.

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