



Tooth Talk

“Hey Doc, I am SCARED of going to the dentist!!! Can you help me? (Part 3)”

For patients who have a higher level of dental anxiety or phobia and require more than minimal sedation offered by Nitrous Oxide (Laughing Gas), Oral Conscious Sedation may just be the solution! In oral conscious sedation, the anxious patients are given oral sedatives, either in the form of a pill or a liquid, to take before undergoing dental treatment.

The sedatives will relieve most of the stress and anxiety that patients feel before dental treatment. Patients will not lose consciousness: they will be able to breath on their own, maintain their own protective reflexes, and follow instructions given by the dentist. Sometimes, patients will be prescribed a sedative to take before they go to bed the night before the appointment so that they can have a good night sleep.

Depending on the dosage given to the patients, oral sedation can achieve different levels of dental sedation, from minimal/ light to moderate sedation. Moderate sedation is achieved with a higher dose, and it allows slightly depressed level of consciousness. Patients, however, remain awake and are able to breath on their own, retain their reflexes and respond to verbal instructions.

Oral conscious sedation should not be confused with “sleep dentistry”. Sleep dentistry is a form of deeper sedation characterized by depressed consciousness, partial or complete loss of protective reflexes, and inability to breathe independently or respond to physical stimulation or verbal commands..

After oral sedation, patients may feel like they are sleepy because of little or no memory of what happened during the appointment. That is due to the amnesic effect of the oral medication, not because patients were actually under sleep.

The followings are some of the advantages of oral sedation:

- 1) Effectiveness- Oral sedation often provides mild to moderate level of sedation adequate for most anxious patients to receive their treatment under a comfortable environment.
- 2) Ease of administration- Patients are only required to swallow some pills or take a liquid by mouth.
- 3) Safety- Oral sedation is safe as the sedatives for oral sedation rarely cause over dosage.
- 4) Amnesia- Patients will have little or no memory of the dental procedures with oral sedation.
- 5) Patient comfort=Time saving- More dental treatment can be performed in each appointment with oral sedation as patients are relaxed and comfortable.

Disadvantages of oral sedation include:

- 1) No pain relief- Unlike Nitrous Oxide, oral sedation does not provide analgesia or pain relief. Therefore, needles are needed for pain control during procedures.
- 2) Long latent period- The onset of oral sedation is usually about 30 to 60 mins versus Nitrous oxide (3 to 5 mins) or IV sedation (3 to 10 mins).
- 3) Non-predictable sedation level- Level of sedation achieved with oral sedation varies among patients. It is not as precise as IV sedation.
- 4) Difficult to adjust sedation level- Unlike Nitrous Oxide or IV sedation, it is difficult to adjust the level of sedation with oral sedation. Although possible to provide additional dose of oral sedatives, it increases the risk of overdosage. Also, reversing the sedative effect is more difficult as compared to Nitrous Oxide or IV sedation.
- 5) Need for prior arrangements- An escort is required to take the patient to the appointment and take the patient home after the appointment as oral sedatives cause drowsiness and the patient will not be able to drive home by himself or herself.
- 6) Long-lasting effect- The effect of oral sedation can last for hours after the treatment is completed. Therefore, patients are required to follow safety restrictions for 24 hours after oral sedation (ie. no driving, no operation of machinery etc.).
- 7) Inadequate level of sedation for patients with severe gag reflexes.

In summary, oral conscious sedation is a highly effective method of providing comfort to the anxious/phobic patients during dental treatments. It can be used in combination with Nitrous Oxide (Laughing Gas) to further enhance the comfort level for the patients.



ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS



4 Russell St. E., Lindsay
www.drctorsun.com
705 324-0050