

# Sedation

**This leaflet explains more about sedation in the emergency department, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and what you can expect when you come to hospital.**

**If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is sedation?

Sedation involves giving medicines through a drip (cannula), usually in the arm or the hand. The medicines reduce both pain and anxiety so that doctors and nurses can carry out a medical procedure, such as putting a dislocated joint back in place or putting a broken bone in plaster.

Sedation is not the same as a general anaesthetic - you may feel sleepy or go to sleep but you will still be breathing for yourself. The aim of the sedative is to reduce pain, make you feel more relaxed about the treatment or procedure and reduce your fears and anxieties.

## Why should I have sedation?

A sedative will help you to have a medical procedure without pain, anxiety or distress.

How the sedation will help and why we suggest that you have both the sedation and the procedure, will be discussed with you by your doctor.

## What are the risks?

Sedation is generally a very safe procedure and is carried out in a safe environment by trained doctors and nurses.

There are known risks and complications which are usually temporary but some may cause long-term problems.

You will be thoroughly assessed before the sedation and monitored closely before, during and after to ensure it is safe and appropriate for you to undergo sedation and to minimise the possibility of any complications occurring.

If it is not safe to continue, this will be discussed with you and another plan will be made.

Where possible, your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of both the sedation and the procedure with you, so that you can make an informed decision about whether to give your consent to the sedation and the procedure.

Common side effects include:

- headache
- faintness or dizziness
- temporary low blood pressure.

Less common side effects include:

- nausea and vomiting
- muscle aches and pains
- weakness
- mild allergic reaction (itching or rash)
- sore or dry throat and lips.

Uncommon side effects include:

- damage to teeth
- allergic reactions.

Very rare side effects include:

- severe allergic reaction
- vomit in the lungs (pneumonia)
- breathing difficulties
- stroke
- heart attack
- brain damage.

These risks will be discussed with you by your doctor.

## **Asking for your consent**

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

## **What happens during sedation?**

The doctor will examine you to make sure it is safe to give you the sedative medication. You will then be given extra oxygen to breathe through a mask and the sedation medicine will be given slowly through a drip. You may feel sleepy.

The procedure will only be carried out when you are relaxed and sleepy enough. You will probably not remember this happening and will wake up after the procedure is finished.

Before, during and after the sedation we will closely monitor your heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels and breathing. You will be observed until you are fully awake and it is safe for you to be discharged from the emergency department.

You should travel home with a responsible adult who can make sure you reach home safely.

## What happens after sedation?

The medicines wear off and you should recover quickly, but you may feel drowsy and unsteady for the next 24 hours.

Sedation may affect your judgment and co-ordination, so for the next 24 hours you **must not**:

- drive any type of vehicle or ride a bicycle or motorbike
- drink alcohol, take mind-altering substances or smoke
- operate any machinery or use any electrical items, even a kettle
- climb any heights e.g. ladders or scaffolding
- sign any important or legally binding documents, or make any important decisions
- be solely responsible for any children or dependents.

## What do I need to do after I go home?

- Rest for the next 24 hours.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a light diet.
- Take painkillers and your regular medicines.
- Take care when going upstairs and using the bathroom or toilet.
- Have a responsible adult there to care for you for 24 hours.

If you feel pain or discomfort, take two paracetamol tablets every six hours, with no more than eight tablets in 24 hours. Do not take these with any other paracetamol products, including those bought from a shop or pharmacy.

If you are able to (please ask your doctor if you are not sure) and have no intolerance or allergy, you can also take two 200mg ibuprofen tablets every eight hours, with no more than six tablets in 24 hours. Take these with food.

On the day of your sedation, it may be sensible to ask the person looking after you to be in charge of your regular medicines and pain relief, in case the effects of the sedative make you forgetful.

**If you develop chest pain or shortness of breath, please contact or return to the emergency department as soon as possible.**

**Please also show this information to the person who is looking after you.**

## Contact us

If you or your carer have any questions or concerns about your sedation, please contact the emergency department on 020 8725 1476 or return to the emergency department.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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