

# Inhalation Sedation for Children's Dental Treatment

**This leaflet explains inhalation sedation as a technique to help provide dental treatment for your child.**

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



## What is Inhalation Sedation (IHS)?

IHS is sometimes referred to as 'happy gas' or 'laughing gas'. It is a light form of sedation that is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide gases, administered by the dentist to your child. It is used to help reduce anxiety and fear in children who are nervous or worried about having dental treatment. It can improve their compliance with treatment and future confidence about going to the dentist.

## What does it feel like?

With you and your child's consent we will turn on the sedation equipment and place a small mask over your child's nose. They will then breathe the mixture of gases mentioned above. Within a few minutes they should start to feel more relaxed. Sensations they may experience include: tingling in the hands and feet, warmth and / or a floaty feeling of the body and the desire to laugh.

The dentist will reassure and talk to your child throughout the procedure. A dental injection may still need to be given but this will not be done until your child is sedated. Your child will be awake throughout the procedure. At the end of treatment the nitrous oxide gas will be turned off and your child will be given only oxygen to breathe for a few minutes to allow the sedation effect to wear off.

## Who can have it?

Children as young as 4 to 5 years old can be treated using it. You (the person with legal parental responsibility) will need to sign a consent form to confirm that you agree to the treatment we are proposing for your child – having understood the risks, benefits and alternatives available that we will have explained to you.

## Who can't have it?

Very young children often breathe through their mouth and have limited communication skills. This reduces the success of IHS as a technique in such children.

If your child has a blocked nose, sinus problems or ear infection it is better to contact the department and rearrange the appointment.

Children with certain health problems and children who refuse wear the nose mask may also not be suitable for this type of sedation. Your dentist will assess your child's specific needs and advise you of the alternative options available.

## What are the benefits?

The purpose of IHS is to help reduce any anxiety, worry or stress that your child may have about having dental treatment. It offers a safe and effective way of helping the child cope with the treatment they require whilst still conscious (awake) in the dental chair. It often helps children who are afraid of dental injections and can also help those who tend to gag when areas of their mouth are touched.

## What are the risks and after effects?

IHS is a very safe technique with no lasting health risks when used for dental treatment. However, for some children the technique is ineffective perhaps because they have not been able to breathe in and out through their nose consistently or they are too anxious to focus their mind on their breathing. Very rarely, children may feel dizzy, experience a ringing sound in their ears or feel nauseous or vomit during the sedation.

## What can I do?

To help prepare your child for the appointment you can encourage your child to practise breathing in and out through their nose with their mouth open for 10 minutes or so every day for a few days in the lead up to the appointment.

We recommend that you give them a light meal before coming for the appointment. Any prescribed medication should be taken as normal. Please let the dentist know if you are pregnant as nitrous oxide could have potential harmful effects to the unborn child. Do not bring other children to this appointment as your child requires your full attention.

After the appointment your dentist will advise you if your child can resume normal activity or not. This often depends on what actual treatment was carried out. Mouth care advice will be given.

We will discuss all appropriate treatment options with you and encourage you to ask any questions you may have.

*The contents of this leaflet have been adapted for use with permission from the Department of Paediatric Dentistry at Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Trust.*

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about inhalation sedation, please contact the paediatric dental department on 020 8672 1255 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

**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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

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

### NHS UK

The NHS 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 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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