
What is nitrous oxide?

Nitrous oxide is a medicine in the form of gas that works fast. It helps your child relax and helps decrease pain. It makes people feel sleepy but most often does not cause a deep sleep. Nitrous oxide is:

- Also called laughing gas.
- Often used for procedures at the dentist.
- Used for certain medical procedures, such as when a child needs stitches.

How does the care team give it?

The care team gives nitrous oxide with oxygen through a nose mask or face mask.

- Before your child breathes through the mask, they will be able to choose a smell they like, such as bubble gum or strawberry, to place in the mask.
- In a few minutes, your child may start laughing, get disoriented (confused), and then get relaxed and sleepy.
- The care team will check your child closely until the medicine wears off.
- The air that your child breathes back out into the mask is suctioned out of the room.

What are the side effects?

Nitrous oxide is safe for use in children. Side effects are uncommon and most often mild.

- Common side effects include upset stomach (nausea), vomiting (throwing up) and headache.
- Headache can happen at the end of the procedure. It almost always goes away after breathing just oxygen for a few minutes.
- Nitrous oxide is not used for women in their first 3 months of pregnancy.
 - **Tell us if you think you are pregnant.** We will ask that you step out of the room while your child gets nitrous oxide.
 - **Also tell us if there is a chance your child may be pregnant.**

What can I expect after it is stopped?

Nitrous oxide wears off very fast.

- The care team will give your child just oxygen to breathe for a short time.
- Your child should wake up feeling comfortable.
- A small number of children can be confused or irritable before they wake up fully. This goes away in a few minutes.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Nitrous oxide, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Vomits (throws up) 3 or more times.
- Has fast, shallow breathing.
- Has a tight feeling in the chest.

Also call the doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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