

Before Sedation – Caring for Your Child



Patient and Family Education

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.

What is sedation?

Sedation uses medicines to help your child be relaxed, calm and sleepy (sedated). It is often used during certain medical tests and procedures. It can help your child stay calm, be able to lie still and have less pain.

Patients who have sedation:

- Are able to breathe on their own.
- Appear very sleepy but can sometimes still hear you and respond to your voice and touch. Other times, they may be sleeping soundly.
- Have their blood pressure, heart rate and breathing checked often.
- Will have a pulse oximeter (a painless type of monitor that records the oxygen level in the blood) attached to a finger or toe.
- May have oxygen given to them during the procedure.
- May or may not remember what happens to them while they are sedated.

How is sedation given to my child?

Medicines, such as pain medicines and sedatives, are used to produce sedation. These medicines may be given by mouth or through an IV (intravenous) line.

Is there any risk from sedation?

Like all medical procedures, sedation involves some risk. If you have questions, please feel free to talk with your doctor or nurse about any questions or concerns you may have beforehand.

Who gives my child the medicines for sedation?

Sedation medicines are prescribed by your child's doctor and usually given by a nurse or doctor.

What are some of the possible side effects of the medicines used for sedation?

Side effects depend on the exact medicine used. In general, some side effects may include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Sleepiness
- Rash
- Itching
- Agitation (crying and restless)
- Dizziness
- Unsteady balance

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

Before Sedation – Caring for Your Child, continued

- Amnesia (may forget what happens while sedated)
- The need for oxygen or help with breathing
- Other risks as outlined in the consent form

How long will my child be sedated?

Your child will usually be sedated until the test or procedure is done. Depending on the medicine used, he may be sleepy for several hours after it is stopped. If your child is an outpatient, he may need to stay at Children's for several hours until he is awake enough to go home.

How can I help prepare my child for sedation?

Each child is very different, but some general guidelines to help you prepare your child for his test or procedure include:

- Your child will not be able to eat or drink before the test or procedure.
 - **If he does eat or drink, the test or procedure may need to be cancelled and rescheduled.**
 - **Very carefully**, follow any directions you have been given about not giving your child anything to eat or drink.
 - Having an empty stomach can help decrease the risk of problems during sedation. This is very important for your child's safety.
- You may bring along a bottle of juice or formula to give your baby or a snack for your child for after the procedure if your doctor permits.
- Be honest with your child. Keep explanations short and simple, but tell him what will happen.
 - Tell toddlers and preschoolers right before you are ready to leave for the hospital.
 - Tell school-age children the day before the procedure.
 - Tell teens several days before so they can mentally prepare for the procedure.
- If it is going to hurt (such as a needle stick to start the IV), talk with your child about it. Let him know it is OK to cry.
- Keep your child in your arms or in the bed with the side rails up after he receives his medicine. This can help prevent him from falling.
- Be calm – your child will usually model your mood and behavior.
- Distract your child. Depending on his age, here are some ideas:
 - Hold, cuddle and soothe babies. Use a pacifier.
 - Talk or sing in a soothing voice.
 - Allow him to hold a favorite blanket or toy from home.
 - Read a story.
- Play an electronic game, or watch a video
- Your child may need to wear a "safety belt" called a medical immobilizer during the procedure to help him stay very still. This is used for your child's safety.

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