SAINT JAMES HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION – SEDATION

What is intravenous sedation?

Intravenous sedation is when a sedative (sedation medicine) is injected into your bloodstream (vein) to relax you.

There are three different levels of intravenous sedation. They are called “minimal”, “moderate” (sometimes also called conscious sedation) and “deep” sedation.

- ***Minimal sedation*** – you will be given a small amount of sedative. You will feel relaxed and less worried by what is happening around you, but you will be awake and able to talk normally. You are likely to remember having your treatment, but not all the detail. Minimal sedation should not affect your breathing.
- ***Moderate sedation*** (conscious sedation) – you will be given a little more sedative(s) so you will feel very relaxed and drowsy. Importantly though, you will still be able to follow simple instructions. You may remember some parts of your treatment. Moderate sedation should not affect your breathing.
- ***Deep sedation*** – you will be given a higher dose of one or more drugs that will make you sleep during most of your treatment. Your doctor will not expect to talk to you during your treatment. Your breathing may be affected, so our team will keep a close eye on you and help with your breathing if needed. You may sometimes remember part of your treatment.

What is oral sedation?

This can sometimes be useful to relax very anxious people before a general anaesthetic, but it is usually not enough to relax you during a procedure on its own. It takes a while to work and it can be difficult to get the right dose as it varies between people.

What are the benefits of intravenous sedation?

- It is quick acting and the dose can be adjusted so you get just the right amount.
- It allows you to be more relaxed during your treatment. It may also mean that you remember very little about your treatment afterwards.
- For some procedures, it avoids the need for a general anaesthetic which may be unsuitable for patients with some medical problems.
- It usually has fewer side effects than a general anaesthetic.
- Recovery is quicker than after a general anaesthetic, so you can usually go home within an hour of your treatment if you feel well.

What are the risks of intravenous sedation?

- Your breathing rate may become slow. This is common in deep sedation, but is a risk whenever sedation is used. The doctor is skilled in monitoring you and can assist your breathing if required.
- It is common for your blood pressure to drop, but the doctor is trained in treating this too.
- Feeling sick or vomiting can happen, but is uncommon.
- Any allergic reaction to the sedation drugs is very rare.
- You may have a small bruise where your cannula was placed or attempted.
- Afterwards you may feel less steady on your feet and you may be at higher risk of falling, especially if you are elderly.

- Sedation can affect your judgement and memory for up to 24 hours.

What are the alternatives to sedation?

- A general anaesthetic: you will be fully unconscious throughout and have no memory of the procedure.
- Local anaesthetic without any sedation: you will be fully awake during your treatment, but will be comfortable. A screen can be placed to stop you seeing the procedure.

Who decides whether I can have sedation?

You can discuss the option of sedation with your doctor or nurse at the time of assessment. If it hasn't been offered, you can always ask to see if it is possible to have it. If you are at higher risk from existing medical conditions, your doctors will discuss the options with you and you can reach a decision together.

What will happen before my treatment?

When you go to the procedure room, you will have some monitoring equipment attached to you. The equipment used will depend upon what procedure and type of sedation you are having, but will usually include:

- A blood pressure cuff on your arm
- Leads on your upper chest to record your heart rhythm
- A clip on your finger to measure your oxygen levels
- A small tube or mask will be used to monitor your breathing throughout the procedure.

We will check your comfort, breathing, and level of alertness throughout the procedure

How is intravenous sedation given?

- The sedation is given through a drip (cannula) which is put into a vein in your arm or the back of your hand. More can be given as you need it during the procedure. In deep sedation you will usually have a drug given continuously into your vein.
- You will usually have oxygen to breathe from a plastic tube sitting just inside your nose, or through a face mask.

What does sedation feel like?

This will vary between people, depending on how much of the drug they are given. In deep sedation you will be asleep, but in light sedation you usually feel pleasantly relaxed.

When can I go home?

- If you have light or moderate sedation, you can usually go home within an hour of your treatment.
- If you have deep sedation, your recovery will likely take one to two hours. When you can go home may often depend on recovery from the procedure itself.

Are there any important instructions for afterwards?

- A capable adult will need to take you home by car or taxi – ideally not public transport – and remain with you overnight. If arrangements have not been made for someone to accompany you after treatment, you may not be able to go home after the procedure.
- Sedation may make you unsteady on your feet. Please be careful on stairs and have somebody with you if you feel unsteady.
- Your decision making may be affected for up to 24 hours after your treatment, so you should not make any important decisions during that time. Be careful if using social media.
- You should not return to work, look after dependants, drive, cook or operate any machinery for 24 hours. It can take 24 hours for the drugs to leave your body.
- You should not take any alcohol or sleeping tablets for 24 hours after the procedure.

Side-effects, complications and risks

In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Risk cannot be removed completely, but modern drugs, equipment and training have made anaesthesia a much safer procedure in recent years.