

Nitrous Oxide

Perhaps you've heard your friends or other patients in the office talk about the benefits of nitrous oxide (N₂O₂) or "laughing gas". It may be an option for you during your next procedure. Here are some important facts that you should review first.

What is Nitrous Oxide?

It is a non-allergenic, non-irritating gas that affects the central nervous system. It's one of the safest forms of sedation available and patients who have used it report very few, if any, side effects. There are no ill effects on the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys or brain. If you're like most patients, you'll begin to feel the nitrous oxide take effect within 3-5 minutes. Following treatment the effects of this gas are completely reversed within 3-5 minutes, simply by breathing normally. In fact, you will be able to safely drive home or to work following your appointment.

What are the benefits of having Nitrous Oxide during dental treatment?

These are the most common:

- 1. Nitrous makes you feel more comfortable during your appointment*
- 2. You remain conscious and are fully aware during treatment*
- 3. The depth of sedation can be varied throughout your treatment as required*
- 4. Gag reflex and flow of saliva are somewhat decreased*
- 5. Nitrous can reduce the discomfort or anxiety associated with an injection of local anesthesia*
- 6. It helps to eliminate fear and reduces anxiety by helping you relax*

Who can have Nitrous Oxide?

There are practically no side effects and there are very few risks associated with nitrous oxide use. Asthmatic patients or those suffering from severe bronchitis or other known lung disorders may elect not to use it. Dentists primarily use nitrous to alleviate tension and anxiety in their fearful patients. As a precaution, patients should not eat anything for about two hours prior to use of the gas. Patients that are pregnant should not use nitrous.

Nitrous oxide is used in roughly one-third of dental practices in the United States. The gas is administered with a comfortable mask placed over the nose, and the patient is instructed to breathe in through the nose and out through their mouth. The patient begins to feel a pleasant level of sedation anywhere from 30 seconds to three or four minutes. The cheeks and gums will also begin to feel numb in about a third of the patients.

What should I do before taking Nitrous Oxide?

Inform us of any changes in your medical history, or any medications that you are presently taking. We generally recommend that you avoid eating a large meal prior to treatment. The less you talk and the more you breathe through your nose during your treatment, the faster and more efficiently the gas works.

A Final Word.....

Nitrous Oxide is a safe, reversible adjunct to help you relax during treatment. You remain conscious and "in control" throughout the procedure. Simply relax and breathe deeply through your nose. It's just that easy.

Insurance companies will not pay for this option. Therefore, it is an out of pocket expense.