Let's Talk About...

Sedation for tests and procedures

Your child is scheduled for a test or procedure where she will receive sedation. It is important to read this information and talk to your child about what she can expect.

What is sedation?

Sedation is when a person receives medicine to help them relax, and be calm and sleepy (sedated). It is often used for certain medical tests or procedures.

A child who has sedation:

- Is able to breathe on their own.
- Appears very sleepy, but can sometimes still hear you and respond to your voice and touch. Other times, they may be sleeping soundly.
- Has their blood pressure, heart rate and breathing monitored continually by specially trained medical personnel.
- May receive oxygen during the procedure.
- May not remember what happens to them while they are sedated.

Why are children sedated?

Some tests require a child to be very still for accurate results. It is usually difficult for children to be quiet and still for any length of time, especially in a place that is not familiar to them. Other procedures or tests can be uncomfortable or may seem scary to a child. The goal of sedation is to provide your child with an experience where they are not anxious and they feel safe and comfortable.

Does every child need sedation for every test?

No. Although sedation decreases the risks, there are risks with sedation. Your healthcare provider will let you know if they think sedation is right for your child's test or procedure. This will depend on your child's age, medical problems and the test. Many children can have a test with just being distracted during the test and other children require sedation.

When can I feed my child?

Your child should not eat food or drink liquids for a certain amount of time before the sedation. Most of the time, your child should not eat solid food or milk for six hours before the surgery and should not have breast milk for four hours before the surgery and should not have clear liquids for two hours before the surgery. It is very important for your child's safety that you follow instructions about food and liquids. This is so your child's stomach is empty during the procedure. If your child's stomach is not empty, the sedation medicine can cause him to be sick to his stomach and vomit. If a child vomits while he is sedated, he could accidentally breathe the vomit into his airway. This could cause pneumonia and other complications.

How do you prepare yourself and your child for the sedation experience?

Feel free to bring your child's favorite toys or items of comfort such as binkies, blankets, and stuffed animals. Things to distract your child such as ipads or ipods are great, too.

What happens before my child receives sedation?

You will arrive at the hospital about one hour before your child's procedure or test. Please arrive on time because there are many things important to your child's safety that have to be done before sedation. If you are late, the test or procedure may not be done that day and may have to be rescheduled. You may need to fill out forms or consents. Your child will be weighed and measured and be examined for their blood pressure, heart and respiratory rate and temperature. The sedation provider will ask you about your child's medical history and examine

your child. The provider will talk with you about the options for sedation and describe the risks and benefits of each option. You are encouraged to ask questions and participate in your child's plan of care.

How do they choose the type of sedation for my child?

Your child's provider will think about all these factors when deciding what kind of sedation is right for your child:

- The test or procedure your child will receive
- The length of time the procedure will take
- Whether or not the procedure is uncomfortable

It helps to know if your child has received sedation before and how she did with it. Sedation medication can be received in different ways, some of those are:

- Spray in the nose
- Taken by mouth
- Injected into a muscle or vein
- Inhaled

What happens after sedation?

Because sedation medicine may cause shallow breathing and may affect heart rate or blood pressure, your child will be monitored and observed after sedation until she is awake and returns to normal. The amount of time a child is monitored after sedation depends on how quickly she wakes up. If your child is coming to the hospital for an outpatient test or procedure, you should plan to stay about one to four hours. Your child can go home after an outpatient test or procedure when she wakes up, drinks clear fluids, and doesn't feel sick to her stomach or throw up.

How do I care for my child after sedation?

You will receive instructions about how to care for your child at home. Be sure to read these carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand. Your child should not be left alone after sedation. She will probably not be able to do normal activities for the rest of the day. Your child may feel sick to her stomach and be irritable while she recovers from the sedation. She may sleep more than usual for up to 24 hours, but she should be easy to wake up and act normally when she is awake. If you are concerned that your child has side effects from sedation when you get home, call the number listed on your written instructions.

Intermountain
Primary Children's Hospital
The Child First and Always®

© 2013 Intermountain Healthcare, Primary Children's Hospital All of the information contained in the ***Let's Talk About . . .*** series is for educational purposes only. This educational information is not a substitute for medical advice or for care from a physician or other health care professional. If you have questions about your child's health, contact your health care provider.

Pediatric Education Services, 801.662.3500 | Rev. 10/13, LTA520408013 | *Available in Spanish*