

Let's Talk About...

Sedation for Tests and Procedures

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

- Can breathe on their own
- Appears very sleepy, but can sometimes still hear you and respond to your voice and touch
- Sleeps soundly
- Has their blood pressure, heart rate and breathing monitored continually by specially trained medical staff
- May receive oxygen during the procedure
- May not remember what happens to them while 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, especially in a place they aren't familiar with. Children may be scared or uncomfortable with other procedures or tests. The goal of sedation is to help your child feel safe and comfortable.

Does every child need sedation for every test?

No. There are risks with sedation. Your healthcare provider will tell you if they think sedation is right for your child. This will depend on your child's age, medical problems and the test or procedure. You may be able to distract your child during a test so they won't need sedation to calm down. Other children will need 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. Follow these sedation eating and drinking guidelines before the procedure or test:

- No solid food or milk for up to 6 hours
- No breast milk up to 4 hours
- No clear liquids up to 2 hours

Protect your child by following instructions about food and liquids to ensure your child's stomach is empty during the procedure. If your child's stomach is not empty, the sedation medicine can make your child vomit and accidentally breathe the vomit into their 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 comfort items such as pacifiers, blankets, and stuffed animals. Things that help distract your child, such as iPads or iPods are a great option.

What happens before my child receives sedation?

Come to the hospital about 1 hour before your child's procedure or test. Please arrive on time. 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. A nurse will also weigh and measure your child. They will then check their blood pressure, heart and respiratory rates, and temperature.

The sedation provider will ask you about your child's medical history and examine your child. They will talk with you about sedation options 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 sedation provider will think about all of the factors when deciding what kind of sedation is right for your child. These factors are based on:

- Your child's test or procedure
- How long the test or procedure will take
- Whether or not the test or procedure is uncomfortable

It helps the provider to know if your child has received sedation before and how they reacted.

How is sedation medicine given?

Sedation medicine can be:

- Sprayed in the nose
- Swallowed 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, a nurse will monitor your child after sedation until they wake up and act normal. The amount of time a child is monitored after sedation depends on how quickly they wake up. If your child is coming to the hospital for an outpatient test or procedure, you should plan to stay about 1–4 hours. Your child can go home after an outpatient test or procedure when they wake up, drink clear fluids, and don't feel sick to their stomach or throw up.

How do I care for my child after sedation?

The sedation provider will give you instructions about caring for your child at home. Read these carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

Your child will probably not be able to do normal activities for the rest of the day, may feel sick, and be irritable. They may sleep more than usual for up to 24 hours. However, they should be easy to wake up and act normally when they are awake.

Do not leave your child alone after sedation. If you are concerned that your child has side effects from sedation when you get home, call the number listed on your written instructions.

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