

Pre-appointment jitters? Relax or sleep your worries away!

At New Smiles, our top priorities are quality dentistry and the comfort and safety of all our patients. Some of our patients suffer from extremely sensitive teeth, or require prolonged treatment time due to the extensive nature of their dental work. Others feel a deep sense of anxiety over dental procedures. For your comfort and safety, New Smiles offers several levels of sedation dentistry.



Nitrous oxide. Nitrous oxide, or "laughing gas," is the lightest form of conscious sedation. It is administered by breathing through a nasal mask. It has several very appealing properties. First, it is very short acting and is completely eliminated from the body minutes after turning it off, thereby allowing the patient to leave the office without an escort because there is no "hangover" effect. Secondly, nitrous oxide can be patient regulated. If you want to feel more of its effects, you simply breathe more frequently and deeply. Conversely, if you breathe through your mouth, you will feel less of its effects.

Oral minimal sedation. Oral pre-medication or pills are the next step up in the conscious sedation spectrum. Many different medications can be used, with Valium, Halcion and Ativan being some of the most common ones. The advantages to oral pre-medication are that it is more effective than nitrous oxide, and it is also very inexpensive to administer. The patient will usually take the medication a half hour to one hour prior to the appointment, and the duration of the effects will vary. But, in all cases, the patient must have an escort both to and from the office. Although more effective than nitrous oxide, the effectiveness and onset of action are unpredictable.

IV moderate sedation. Intravenous sedation, also known as "twilight or conscious sedation," will put you in a safe, relaxed and comfortable state throughout your surgery. It is the most effective means of reducing awareness and anxiety for dental procedures. It is administered through an intravenous line (IV), and is therefore much more predictable in terms of effectiveness due to the quick onset of action. Although the patient is technically conscious throughout the procedure, in most cases, they will be completely unaware of the dental procedure and may even fall asleep. The disadvantage of conscious sedation is, of course, the increased cost and the need for an escort home after the procedure.

General anesthesia. This type of IV sedation must be administered by an anesthesiologist because the level of sedation is much greater and often requires the use of a breathing tube. The patient is unconscious throughout the entire procedure. This level of sedation is reserved for patients who are not candidates for either oral or IV moderate sedation or for prolonged dental or surgical procedures. It is very safe and effective but more expensive than IV moderate sedation.