

Nitrous Oxide Treatment Guide

What to Expect

Nitrous Oxide, often referred to as “laughing gas,” is a safe and effective sedation option for patients undergoing dental procedures. This gas helps reduce feelings of anxiety, promoting a calm and relaxed state. Many individuals report sensations of euphoria, lightheadedness, or a “floaty” feeling, and for some, it can also act as a mild pain reliever.

The nitrous oxide is administered through a mask placed over your nose, allowing you to breathe in a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen. The mask only covers your nose and not your mouth. Once inhaled, the gas takes effect quickly and begins to wear off once the treatment is finished. Throughout your procedure, your healthcare provider will monitor your heart rate and oxygen levels using a small device clipped to your finger.

Everyone responds differently to nitrous oxide, so your provider will carefully adjust the levels of gas to suit your needs. You’ll be closely monitored, and you’ll be able to communicate with the provider during the procedure. After the treatment, you may be given pure oxygen to help you recover more quickly.

For most people, the effects of nitrous oxide wear off within minutes of stopping its administration. However, some may feel a bit drowsy, disoriented, or uncoordinated, though these side effects are temporary. You’ll remain in the care of your dentist or specialist until you’re fully recovered.

Pre-Treatment Guidelines

- Avoid heavy meals before your appointment.
- Stop eating or drinking at least 2 hours prior to your procedure.
- A responsible adult must accompany you to ensure your safe return home.

Post-Treatment Care

- Have a responsible adult stay with you for at least 8 hours after your treatment.
- Avoid large meals for at least 3 hours.
- If you feel nauseous after the procedure, try drinking water, sucking on an ice cube, or eating clear soup.

If you experience prolonged nausea, difficulty breathing, or any other concerning symptoms after treatment, seek medical attention immediately by visiting your doctor or the nearest emergency department.

During Your Treatment

Nitrous oxide will only be administered once you're comfortably settled in the dental chair. The gas is designed to help you relax, and you may even feel drowsy, though you’ll still be aware of your surroundings. Some details of the procedure may be unclear to you afterward,

but rest assured that you'll be closely monitored to ensure your comfort. Oxygen will be administered through your mask if necessary. In some cases, additional local anesthetic may be used alongside the nitrous oxide.

Possible Side Effects

Nitrous oxide is generally well-tolerated, but there are some potential side effects. These can include nausea, dizziness, headaches, fatigue, and occasional sweating or shivering. Some people may also experience distortions in sound or visual hallucinations, and short-term memory issues related to the procedure. If any of these side effects occur, the administration of nitrous oxide will be stopped immediately.

Rare allergic reactions are possible, and nitrous oxide should be avoided in the following situations:

- Inability to communicate effectively with the dental provider.
- Use of hallucinogenic substances or marijuana.
- Malnutrition or conditions that interfere with vitamin B12 or folate.
- Respiratory conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pulmonary hypertension, or cystic fibrosis.
- Recent eye surgery, ear surgery, or conditions affecting the middle ear.
- Increased intracranial pressure, bowel obstructions, or a history of Bleomycin use.

Caution should be exercised when using nitrous oxide in pregnant individuals or those with multiple sclerosis or compromised immune systems. It is generally safe for individuals with asthma unless they are currently experiencing an asthma attack.