

Patient information

Sedation

What is sedation?

Sedation is the use of medication to make you more relaxed and sleepy. This can be used to allow procedures to take place that would be difficult to manage if you were completely awake. Drugs are usually given intravenously but may sometimes be administered by other routes such as by mouth or through a face mask.

There are different levels of sedation. These are called minimal, moderate (sometimes called conscious) and deep. These levels are more of a continuum than discrete levels. It may take a while to reach the desired level as people respond to medication differently.

The main differences with sedation compared to general anaesthesia are:

- Your level of consciousness
- The need for equipment to support your breathing
- Possible side effects

Whilst having sedation you should be comfortable, sleepy and relaxed. You may drift off to sleep but should be rousable. This differs from general anaesthesia where you will be unconscious and completely unaware of your surroundings.

What may I have sedation for at the West Suffolk hospital?

Sedation may be used for a variety of procedures in different departments across the hospital. This leaflet is specifically about sedation for adult patients delivered by an anaesthetist.

Anaesthetists may provide sedation in the operating department to accompany other forms of anaesthetic or analgesia to facilitate a variety of operations such as hip and knee replacements. Outside of the operating department, anaesthetists may provide

deep sedation for procedures in the endoscopy department where you have requested it, perhaps because lighter sedation offered by non-anaesthetists has not been sufficient to complete your procedure. Anaesthetists may also provide sedation for some procedures in the interventional radiology department where the doctors providing the procedure feel that it would be of benefit to you.

Anaesthetists may also be asked on a case-by-case basis to help with sedation in other areas of the hospital.

If you have been offered sedation but do not want it, it may be possible to have your procedure without sedation. This may include having the procedure with no medication, local anaesthetic alone, or with a general anaesthetic. Please discuss this with the doctors looking after you.

Preparing for a procedure under sedation

In preparation for your procedure under sedation please:

- Ensure that you have a responsible adult at home to look after you for the 24 hours following your sedation
- Ensure that you have a supply of all your medications. Bring the medications and a list of these with you to the hospital
- Come to the hospital without make-up or nail polish as this may affect the accuracy of our monitors used during the procedure and put you at risk
- The pre-assessment unit, radiology or endoscopy departments will provide you with instructions about whether you are able to eat and drink in the run up to your procedure
- If you are ill and are concerned you may not have recovered by the date of your surgery, please contact the department in which your procedure is taking place as it may need to be postponed for you to safely have sedation on another day

Procedure

You will be shown into the room where your procedure is going to be performed or an anaesthetic room. You will be helped on to a narrow procedural bed. Your details, consent and a few details about your medical history will be confirmed.

Following the safety checks a small plastic tube (cannula) will be inserted into one of veins on the back of your hand. Monitoring will be attached to measure your oxygen levels, blood pressure and pulse rate. You will be given oxygen to breathe either via a facemask or via nasal prongs. Once the monitoring is in place the sedation will be started. This will be adjusted until you are relaxed and sleepy. Many people drift off to sleep during the procedure. You will often be able to communicate with your anaesthetist throughout the procedure if needed.

The sedation offered by anaesthetists at the West Suffolk Hospital is usually intravenous. This may be by infusion or by repeated doses. The most common drugs used in this setting are propofol and ketamine, though others may also be used depending on what your anaesthetist feels is best for you for the procedure you are having. The main sedative drug may also be supplemented by intravenous painkillers.

At the end of the procedure, the sedating medication will be stopped and you will wake. You may remember all of the procedure, bits of the procedure or nothing at all once you have recovered from sedation.

You will need to be observed in the hospital until you recover enough from sedation. You will need to have a responsible adult at home for the 24 hours following sedation to ensure that medical attention can be sought if you experience problems.

Benefits

Benefits of sedation include:

- Sedation works quickly and the dose can be easily adjusted to ensure you get the correct amount.
- It allows you to remain relaxed during a procedure and you may not remember much after the procedure.
- For some procedures it is possible to give sedation as an alternative to general anaesthesia and this may allow patients with medical conditions to have procedures that they would otherwise not be able to have.
- Sedation generally has fewer side effects than general anaesthesia and recovery is quicker. As a result you are usually able to go home within a couple of hours, unless you need to remain in the hospital for other reasons.

Risks

Modern sedation with appropriate monitoring is very safe. However, risk cannot be removed completely. Risks of sedation include:

- Slowing of your breathing. This is more likely with deep sedation. It will be monitored, and your breathing can be supported if needed.
- Your blood pressure may drop. This can be managed by altering the medication you are receiving or by providing medication to support your blood pressure.
- You may have a bruise at the site of the cannula.
- There is a small risk of feeling sick or vomiting.
- There is a rare risk of stomach contents going into your lungs. It is important to follow the guidance regarding eating and drinking around the time of your procedure to keep this risk as low as possible.
- There is always a risk of an allergic reaction to medications, but the chance of this happening with sedative medication is very rare.
- You may feel drowsy or unsteady on your feet for 24 hours.

- You may have impaired memory and judgement for up to 24 hours.

After the procedure

If you are just in hospital for the procedure, you will often be able to go home about 2 hours after the procedure.

You should be accompanied home and for the first 24 hours after receiving sedation and should not be responsible for any dependent adults or children. If you do not have someone at home to look after you for this period, your procedure may be postponed.

You should not take alcohol or sleeping tablets for the first 24 hours after a procedure

Sedation may make you unsteady on your feet so take care on stairs and uneven surfaces.

Your ability to make decisions is altered for 24 hours after sedation. You should not make any decisions during this time. You should also not return to work, drive, operate heavy machinery or cook during this time.

Concerns at home

If you have concerns once you have gone home after the procedure, you should contact the department where your procedure took place, or the ward you were discharged from if it took place in the main operating theatres. This should be done by calling the main hospital switchboard on 01284 713000 and asking to be put through to the correct area.

If you are concerned, feel unwell or cannot find the hospital number, contact your GP, 111, or come to the hospital emergency department.

More information:

You can ask your anaesthetist on the day if you have any questions about your sedation.

More information is available on the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) website section for patients. There is a specific leaflet for sedation available at:

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/leaflets-video-resources/sedation-explained>

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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References:

1. RCoA Leaflet “sedation explained” Available at: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/leaflets-video-resources/sedation-explained>