

Is your fear OF DENTISTS HARMING YOUR ORAL HEALTH?

part 2

By, Dr. Brian Hirschfield



Just like other forms of sedation dentistry, IV sedation is designed to relax you and make you completely comfortable, eliminating your anxiety. You will not be asleep during your appointment and will still be able to respond to verbal cues from your dentist. Because you are completely relaxed, your dentist can accomplish more high-quality dentistry in less time. IV sedation can benefit you if you have a sensitive gag reflex or difficulty sitting in a dental chair for long periods of time. You'll be so relaxed that you'll be unaware of the sights, smells and sounds of the dental office. Patients remember little-to-nothing of their appointment the next day.

Your first appointment with the dentist will usually be a standard consultation. This is when your dentist will take a complete health history, conduct a full evaluation of your needs, perform an oral exam and explain the procedures being recommended. Your blood pressure, oxygen level and heart rate will all be measured, and your dentist may choose to complete x-rays during this appointment as well. It's critical to tell your dentist about all medications and supplements you take so they can check for any potential drug interactions with the sedation medications that will be used. As with all dentistry, safety comes first! Once a treatment plan is agreed upon, your dentist will have you fill out consent forms, answer any questions you may have and issue pre-appointment instructions and/or medications. Your dentist may choose to contact your primary care physician or any medical specialists you see for a consultation. This is done to ensure that you're a good candidate for the type of sedation being proposed.

Most dentists require that a patient does not eat or drink eight hours prior to their IV sedation appointment, and a companion is required to take you to and from the dental office. Your IV sedation dentist or one of their trained assistants will be with you at all times. You will never be left alone. Patients are encouraged to wear loose, comfortable clothing and shoes.

Your dentist will closely monitor you throughout the entire appointment by tracking your blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm, oxygen level, and pulse. Upon administration of the IV medication, you will quickly begin to feel relaxed and at ease. The sights, smells and noises around you will dissipate. Wrapped in blankets, you'll feel warm and safe. Your dentist can usually accomplish a significantly larger amount of high-quality dentistry while you are sedated and relaxed.

There is no set amount of recovery time because every patient is different. However, many patients begin to feel more alert soon after the IV medication is stopped. You should not drive or operate heavy machinery for at least 24 hours after the end of your appointment. Patients are encouraged to sleep and drink plenty of water and clear fluids for the remainder of the day. In regards to recovery from the actual dental work itself, your dentist will give you individualized instructions for aftercare. Many sedation patients report significantly reduced pain levels the day after their treatment. There are multiple theories for why this is, but the common thought is that because a sedation patient is relaxed and not tense during their appointment, the dentist can often use less force as well as access the mouth more easily.

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