Women’s Services

Information for patients attending for conscious sedation and outpatient procedures

Many procedures can be carried out under conscious sedation and is one of the many services offered through the Women’s Health Unit. This leaflet explains what sedation means and what to expect afterwards.

What is conscious sedation?
It is when a patient is given a strong sedative or pain killer to allow them to have a normally uncomfortable procedure done with very little or more often no pain at all. The sedation is given directly into a vein. It starts working almost immediately and wears off very quickly once the procedure is over. During the procedure the patient is awake and can respond verbally to the sedation practitioner who is looking after them. They could even indicate if they do feel any discomfort, although pain doesn’t seem to be a problem.

Conscious sedation can be used when procedures are too uncomfortable to have done under a local anaesthetic alone (a local anaesthetic is when an injection is given locally, i.e., in gynaecology, this is normally into the cervix). It is an alternative to a general anaesthetic when patients are completely asleep and usually have an airway inserted into the back of the throat for breathing purposes.

The advantages over a general anaesthetic are that patients can be treated in the outpatient clinic rather than admitted to the ward, they are usually discharged within 1-2 hours of the procedure so that a hospital visit is normally 3–4 hours at most. Patients undergoing sedation seem to have less nausea (sickness) than those undergoing a general anaesthetic.

Conscious sedation is highly suited to most of the short procedures done in gynaecology.

How should I prepare for a sedation procedure?
Some women may not be suitable for a sedation procedure, please let the medical and nursing staff know of any medical conditions when you book your treatment. Before sedation you will undergo a pre-assessment check.

Because of the small risk of vomiting (being sick) during the procedure you are advised not to eat for six hours before including chewing gum and then you can drink water only for up to two hours before the procedure. You can take your usual medications with a sip of water. We would advise you to take a painkiller before you attend, this helps your recovery. Any suitable painkillers can be taken such as paracetamol alone, paracetamol and codeine, Ibuprofen or any similar non-steroidal painkiller. You must inform the nurse when you attend the clinic what you have taken and when.

Remember:

No food for six hours before the procedure including chewing gum then only water until two hours before the procedure.
Take usual medications with a sip of water.
Consider taking some painkillers before you attend to help your recovery.

You should expect to be in the Women’s Health Unit for 1-2 hours after the procedure. You will be discharged home once you are comfortable; the time taken varies from woman to woman.
What should I expect afterwards?
You should recover from the sedation very quickly and will probably be able to go home after a short rest. Sometimes women find that they have some pain after the procedure. This happens after a general anaesthetic as well as after a sedation procedure. The nurse looking after you can give you more painkillers to make sure that you are comfortable. The nurse will also complete some checks before you go home.

Before you leave the hospital, the doctor / nurse will explain the findings of the procedure, or will make a further appointment to do this. If a biopsy has been taken, it may be 3-4 weeks before the results are available.

When discharged it is important that a responsible adult accompanies you. You are advised to go home by car or taxi. As with all surgical procedures, you should have a responsible adult stay with you overnight after a procedure.

Once home, simple pain relief may be taken if needed. Some women feel ready to resume normal activities and work the day after the procedure, others may need to take a day or two off work.

Most women experience no medical problems following sedation or minor gynaecological procedures. The hospital or a GP should be contacted immediately if you have any concerns. The following symptoms may indicate an infection or other complication:

- Persistent heavy bleeding
- Pain that persists for more than 48 hours
- Swollen abdomen or general abdominal pain (more than just a mild bloating sensation)
- High temperature/fever

Vaginal bleeding and spotting usually settles slowly over days or even weeks. Some women find that the first period following some procedures is heavier or more prolonged than usual.

To help avoid the risk of infection after vaginal procedures, tampons should not be used for at least one week after therapy. Sexual intercourse should be avoided until bleeding stops.

Contact details
Mr Roberts’ secretary - Tel 0191 282 5861
Ward 40, RVI - Tel 0191 282 5640
(24 hours - advice)
Women’s Health Unit - Tel 0191 282 0140
(9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday - advice)

Please note that we do not have staff dedicated to taking calls. By calling one of the telephone numbers above you should be able to speak to one of the ward or clinic staff for clinical advice before or after a procedure. At times all staff may be busy with ward or clinic duties but should be able to call back. In an emergency you can call your GP or attend your local Emergency department.

PALS: 0191 232 5131
NHS Choices: http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx
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