



MeritCare
Children's Hospital

Sedation for tests and procedures

Sedation involves the use of medicine to help a child having a test or procedure.

Why does my child need sedation?

Sedation may be used with tests that cause discomfort or for tests that would be difficult to do properly if your child were to move. Sedation helps us to obtain the best possible results from whatever test or procedure your child is having done.

How do I prepare my child for sedation?

You will get instructions usually a day or so before the scheduled test that include not letting your child eat food or drink liquids for a period of time before the sedation and the test or procedure. You might hear someone say the word "NPO" this is a Latin abbreviation for "nothing by mouth". The amount of time your child can't eat or drink varies dependent on your child's age and what the feeding is.

It is important to follow these instructions since we want to be sure your child's stomach is empty. Sometimes the medicines that we give for sedation can cause your child to have nausea and vomiting. If vomiting happens when your child is sedated he could accidentally breathe in the vomit into his windpipe. This could result in pneumonia and other complications.

What happens before sedation is given?

Before sedation, a health care provider will examine your child and ask questions about your child's medical history and general health. It is important that we know if your child has ever had any problems with any medicine used for sedation or treating pain. These problems may include: a longer than normal period of sleepiness, severe nausea and vomiting, or any breathing problems. Please ask questions if you have them.

What happens during sedation?

The sedation medicine is given to your child a certain period of time before the procedure is scheduled to allow it to work and for your child to go to sleep. It may be given by mouth or into a vein (IV) through a small tube that is inserted into a vein in the foot, hand, arm, or in some infants the scalp. Sometimes fluids are given through the IV also. We will be placing your child on a monitor that shows us their oxygen saturation, pulse, and sometimes respirations and blood pressure. This close monitoring will continue throughout the procedure.

It is not uncommon for children to receive oxygen during sedation and after the procedure.

What can I expect after the procedure?

Sedation medications may cause shallow breathing and may affect heart rate and blood pressure so we will continue to monitor your child very closely. This close monitoring will continue until your child is awake and has returned to his normal state.

The time it takes for your child to wake up varies with each child, the medicine used and how your child reacts to that medicine. You should plan to be at the hospital for at least 2-4 hours in total from the time you arrive on our unit until you are ready to return home. We will want to be

sure that your child is awake and able to drink without any difficulty and without nausea before we discharge him.

What do I need to do for my child after sedation?

You will be given instructions on care for your child at home. Read them over and ask questions if there is anything you are unsure of.

Your child should not be left alone after sedation and he will probably not be able to return to normal activities for much of the day. He may be unsteady when up. He may feel sick to his stomach and may be irritable while recovering from the sedation.

Your child may sleep more than usual for up to 24 hours, but it should be easy to wake him up and he should act normally when he is awake. If you are concerned that there are side effects from the sedation please call the number listed on your written instructions.