

# Sedation for Your Radiology Exam or Procedure

## *What to expect and how to prepare*

*This handout explains moderate and minimal sedation, which are used for some radiology procedures and exams. It explains what to expect, how to prepare, and what to do after sedation.*

## What is sedation?

Sedation medicine will make you sleepy, help you relax, and lessen your discomfort. You will feel drowsy but can still follow instructions, such as holding your breath while an image is taken.

If you have **moderate** sedation:

- Your nurse will give you the sedation medicine through an IV (intravenous) tube before and during your procedure or exam.
- You will receive more than one dose of 2 sedation medicines.

If you have **minimal** sedation:

- You will receive only one dose of sedation medicine to help you relax.
- The medicine will be either a tablet you will swallow, or you may receive it through an IV.



***Sedation will help you relax during your exam or procedure.***

## Before Your Sedation

Before your procedure, we will check your health to determine the type of sedation that will be best for you. Sedation is not safe for some people. We will advise you to have *general anesthesia* (medicine that blocks feeling and makes you sleep) if you:

- Have needed anesthesia for basic procedures in the past. Examples of basic procedures are an *endoscopy* (using a tube with a camera on it to look inside your body) or certain radiology procedures.
- Have *sleep apnea* or chronic breathing problems (you might use a CPAP or BiPAP device while you are sleeping).
- Use high doses of prescription pain medicines, such as *opioids*.
- Have severe heart, lung, or kidney disease.
- Have had a bad reaction to sedation in the past.
- Know that you have problems with your airway or with swallowing, or you have a limited mouth opening.
- Have a mass (such as a cyst or tumor) in your neck.
- Have an enlarged tongue or tonsils that cannot be seen.
- Cannot lie flat on your back for about 1 hour because of back or breathing problems.
- Have a hard time lying still during medical procedures.
- Weigh more than 300 pounds (136 kilograms).
- Are pregnant and past 16 weeks gestation.



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***digital copy of  
this handout.***

## Preparing for Your Sedation

To prepare for sedation, follow these instructions exactly. Starting **6 hours before** your procedure or exam:

- Stop eating solid foods.
- You may have **small sips** of clear liquids such as water, Sprite, apple juice, or cranberry juice, until 2 hours before your sedation.

Starting **2 hours before** your procedure or exam, do **not** eat or drink anything.

## On the Day of Your Sedation

- Take all your usual medicines on the day of your procedure. Do not skip them unless your doctor or nurse tells you to. We suggest that you not take vitamins and supplements on the day you will have sedation. They may upset an empty stomach.
- Bring with you to the hospital a list of **all** the medicines you take.
- You **must** have a responsible adult to drive you home after your procedure. You **cannot** drive yourself home or take a bus, taxi, or shuttle by yourself.
- After you get home, we recommend that someone stay with you the rest of the day.

## Before You Receive Sedation

- A staff member will do a health assessment. Your family member or friend can be with you.
- If you will receive sedation medicine through a vein we will start an *intravenous* (IV) line. See “Moderate Sedation” and “Minimal Sedation” below.
- A radiology doctor will talk with you about the risks and benefits of sedation. Please ask any questions you may have. After your questions are answered, this doctor will ask you to sign a consent form, if you have not already done so.
- The medical team will ask you to confirm your name and birthday and will review your sedation and procedure or exam. This is for your safety.

## Moderate Sedation

If you receive moderate sedation:

- You will receive sedation medicines through an IV.
- Wires will be placed on your chest to help us monitor your heart rate.
- A cuff around your arm will inflate from time to time to check your blood pressure.
- You will have an oxygen *cannula* (thin tube) placed in your nose.
- The nurse who gives you the sedation medicine will be with you for your entire procedure or exam.
- When you feel relaxed from the sedation, we will start your procedure or exam.
- If needed, an interpreter will be in the room and will be able to talk with you.

## Minimal Sedation

If you receive minimal sedation:

- You will be asked to swallow 1 tablet, OR you will receive 1 dose of sedation medicine through an IV.
- You will wait 30 to 60 minutes until you are relaxed from the medicine.
- When you feel relaxed from the sedation, we will start your procedure or exam.
- We will monitor your blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen before, during, and after your procedure.

## After Your Sedation

If you have:

- **An exam** with sedation:
  - You will stay in the Radiology department and be monitored for about 1 hour, until you are fully awake.
- **A procedure** with sedation:
  - You will go to 4-South to recover for 2 to 6 hours.
  - If you had a procedure that involved a puncture, we will make sure there are no signs of bleeding.

During this time:

- We will give you instructions for self-care at home.
- You may not remember much about your procedure or exam. This is normal.
- Most patients can eat and drink once they are fully awake.
- You will be allowed to leave when:
  - You are awake and alert.
  - You can use the restroom and walk.
  - Your responsible person is there to take you home.

## Important Precautions at Home

- For 24 hours after your procedure, do not:
  - Drive
  - Sign important papers
  - Drink alcohol
  - Use machinery
  - Be responsible for the care of another person

## Who to Call

### University of Washington Medical Center and Northwest Hospital

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call the Interventional Radiology Department:

- Montlake: 206.598.6209, option 2
- Northwest: 206.598.6209, option 3

### Harborview Medical Center

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call the Interventional Radiology Department at 206.744.2857.

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

**UWMC – Montlake:**  
206.598.6209, option 2

**UWMC – Northwest:**  
206.598.6209, option 3

**Harborview Medical Center:**  
206.744.2857

### After hours and on weekends and holidays:

Call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Interventional Radiology resident on call.