

Dental Anxiety is No Laughing Matter

by Canyon View Dentistry



Nitrous oxide, frequently called laughing gas, is a colorless, non-flammable gas used in dental procedures to relieve anxiety before the procedure and allow you to relax. Not all patients need this relaxant, but it's good to know many dentists have it if you need it. Often patients have had unpleasant experiences with previous dental work or, in the case of children, no dental experiences at all. This can cause anxiety which can make even a routine procedure feel frightening. Dental anxiety can also cause patients to ignore dental issues.....right up to the moment they start to hurt. A minor issue a dentist could have corrected with a simple filing if they had seen the patient in time, can become a root canal or even an extraction when neglected. Trusting your dentist to use laughing gas appropriately and telling them about your anxiety can make all the difference.

As for the actual procedure, a small plastic mask, referred to as a nitrous nose, will be placed over your mouth and nose. The laughing gas flows through the mask, and you gently breathe it in. Many masks are scented,



some especially for kids. You may also request an unscented mask if that's your preference.

You'll start to feel the effects of the laughing gas within a few minutes. As laughing gas doesn't put you fully to sleep, you'll still be able to hear what's going on around you. You'll still be able to respond to questions that your dentist asks you and follow instructions throughout the procedure. Once it kicks in, nitrous oxide may make you feel giggly and happy, hence the name laughing gas. Once your procedure is over, your doctor will remove the mask that's providing the nitrous oxide and introduce 100% oxygen to help you fully recover within minutes.

Nitrous oxide is safe to use under the proper care of a doctor and, while there may be minor side effects such as a slight lowering of blood pressure, none are long-term. Dentists provide laughing gas for your comfort, so never hesitate to ask for it when you need it. Your dentist always wants you to always have the best possible experience during every visit to their office.



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Dr. Cara McCallum | 720.389.8199
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