



Oral Sedation: The Answer To Dental Anxiety

By Hanna Hanania, DDS

Dental fear has no limits; It affects all types of patients. The American Dental Association estimates that 15-20% of the adult population avoid seeking care for their oral health because of fear. Conscious sedation has allowed many dentist to treat patients that are in desperate need of dental care, but are too afraid to utilize dental services. It is easy to see why this safe, non-judgmental, pleasant experience has welcomed fear stricken patients. Most people are afraid to tell anyone of their fears, however, now these patients know that some dental professionals understand their feelings and it is alright to have such fears. Therefore, oral sedation is utilized to treat their oral conditions.

The tiny pill prescribed is called Triazolam (trye-ay-zoe-lam), also known as Halcion. The drug is the 101 most prescribed sleep aid medication in the United States. In 1988 dentist started prescribing Triazolam for dental sedation.

The use of Triazolam requires a patient comes to arrive at the office half an hour prior to their appointment so they can take the medication. After 45 minutes, most patients (75%) have amnesia (do not remember any or very little of the rest of the appointment). Although they are conscious, they are very relaxed. As stated by Nicole Dalphond, a patient who had been sedated

during a dental visit, "I was sedated for my oral surgery. I felt very relaxed, but still aware of the procedure. I did not feel any pain, not only during but also when the sedation was over. After the procedure I went home and slept four more hours. When I woke up, the numbness had worn off, and I was not sore or anything. I have had I.V. sedation in the past, and would usually feel nauseated once it wore off. With oral sedation, I did not get sick to my stomach and felt great when it was over."

Staying awake allows the patient to communicate with the doctor if something is uncomfortable. The patient can still express their concerns to the doctor while they are under the influence of oral sedation. In most cases, it enables the dentist to complete the patients treatment in one to two visits. Imagine the happiness a person feels when their treatment has been successfully completed, after avoiding their oral health due to fear. Ibrahim Ammar, a patient who was sedated for his dental surgery states, "My dentist had been telling me that I needed my wisdom teeth removed. Finally, I had the procedure done under the influence of oral sedation. Now I have no idea as to why I did not have the surgery sooner. This was the best dental experience that I have ever had."

It is important that oral sedation patients are not pregnant, are not nursing mothers,

are not taking efavirenz or HIV protease inhibitors, seizure medications, do not have glaucoma (an eye disease), do not have myasthenia gravis (a nerve, muscle disease), are not taking other sedatives, tranquilizers, other mood altering drugs, Tagament-Cimetadine (an anti acid drug), or Erythromycin (an antibiotic). It is also important that no alcohol or recreational drugs are taken before or after treatment.

No sedative patient should drive a car, operate heavy machinery, or undertake any potentially dangerous activities. These include such activities as walking unaided and climbing stairs. They should not assume positions of responsibility, or make any important legal decisions for the rest of the day. They should not have alcohol or any other sedatives for at least 24 hours. Additionally, it is necessary to have a responsible adult come with them to take them home and stay with them for the remainder of the evening.

More and more dentists are utilizing this wonderful drug, while more patients are enjoying this experience. The charge for this service varies from practice to practice. The cost ranges anywhere between \$200-500, depending on the office that preforms the service. In our office, we strongly believe in the patients comfort. Therefore, we do not charge for this service. However, the patient is responsible for having the prescription filled. The cost of the prescription usually does not exceed \$15.