

# Entonox

(‘laughing gas’ or ‘gas and air’)

Information for children and their parents/carers





## What is Entonox?

Entonox is a gas which you breathe in to help make pain better. It can also produce feelings of relaxation, which can help you to feel less nervous about being treated by the doctors and nurses.

It is a mixture of 50% nitrous oxide and 50% oxygen. It is sometimes called 'gas and air' or 'laughing gas', as it can make you feel like laughing. We use Entonox to help children to cope with short procedures, as it helps to take the pain away.

## How does Entonox work?

When you breathe in Entonox the gases travel around your body in your blood and quickly help to make your pain better. Entonox usually takes about 1-2 minutes or about 6 breaths to work, so you might have to keep breathing it in for a little while.



## When should I not use Entonox?

Entonox should not be used if you have any condition where air may be trapped in your body.

### **This can happen:**

- if you have pneumothorax (a collapsed lung)
- after an operation to your middle ear
- if you have a suspected blockage in your intestines or
- if you have been deep sea diving within the past 48 hours.

### **You also shouldn't have Entonox:**

- if you have had a recent head injury, especially if you were knocked out or had concussion
- if you are having breathing difficulties
- if you are in the first three months of pregnancy. This also applies to parents, carers and staff, because they will be near to the gas.

Entonox is not suitable for every child. The age at which Entonox can be used varies from child to child and also depends on the procedure they are having.

We will assess children and young people beforehand, for their suitability to use Entonox. This will include being able to understand and follow our simple instructions and being able to hold the mask/mouthpiece without any help whilst breathing in the Entonox.

## When will I be given Entonox?

The Entonox gas is kept in a metal cylinder. It has a tube and a mouthpiece or mask attached. Your nurse will show you how to use the Entonox.

If you are using the mouthpiece, you should hold it between your teeth and lips.

If you are using the mask, you can hold it snugly against your face.

You will be in control of breathing in the Entonox, so it is important that only you hold the mask or mouth piece.

You will be able to practice using the Entonox before your treatment is started. Once you feel happy with how to breathe in the gas, you will be asked to breathe deeply for a few minutes. This is so that the gas has time to start working before your treatment begins. You should continue to breathe slowly and deeply while you are having your treatment, to make sure that the gas doesn't wear off.

If you feel that you have had enough Entonox, you can stop using it at any time by removing the mask from your face or the mouth piece from your mouth. This doesn't matter. We can usually stop your treatment whilst you have a short break from the gas.

## How will I feel when I am using Entonox?

You may feel lightheaded, relaxed and a little sleepy. You may also have tingling around your lips, fingers and toes. This is harmless and will disappear when you stop breathing the gas.

## Side effects of Entonox

- Occasionally Entonox may make you feel sick. This is why we ask you not to eat anything for two hours before using Entonox; this should help to stop you from feeling sick.
- You may have a dry mouth. This will get better once you stop using the Entonox and have a drink.
- You may feel dizzy. Again, this will get better once you stop using the Entonox and rest for a little while.
- Very rarely children become too sedated (sleepy) after using Entonox. If this happens, you may take longer than usual to get over the effects of the Entonox. We will keep you lying down and closely check on your heart rate and breathing until the effects have worn off.

## How long will it take me to recover?

The gas will wear off quite quickly. When you stop breathing it in, it will take 2–3 minutes to get out of your system. You may feel a little lightheaded or dizzy after using the Entonox, so you should have someone with you if you need to walk anywhere. You should also not eat or drink anything until the dizziness has gone.

We recommend that you rest for 30 minutes after the procedure, to make sure the effects of the Entonox have worn off.

If you are old enough to drive, we advise you not to for 12 hours after having Entonox. This is because it could affect your ability to drive safely.

## Can I have other medicine to help with my pain?

Yes, you will still be able to have paracetamol and NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as ibuprofen, naproxen and diclofenac.

If you or your parents/carers are not sure what you are allowed to take, please check with the doctor or nurse, or your GP.

If you have any other questions, please speak to either a doctor or nurse. They will be happy to help you.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **[PALS@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@ouh.nhs.uk)**

Authors: Jude Taylor, Advanced Nurse Practitioner  
Hilary Bridge, Consultant Anaesthetist  
September 2017  
Review: September 2020  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)

