IV Sedation for MRI Scans

You have been scheduled for an MRI scan with intravenous (IV) sedation at UW Hospital and Clinics. If you have trouble being confined in a small space (claustrophobia) or cannot lie still, this may help you through the scan. This handout is given to help you learn about the sedation process.

Important Facts to Know Before You Receive IV Sedation

You must plan for a responsible adult to take you home after your MRI. **You will not be allowed to leave alone or drive yourself home.** Side effects are few, but you may feel drowsy the rest of the day. We advise that you do not return to work and that you are not left alone for the rest of the day.

For 12 hours after your IV sedation:

- Do not drive a car or operate large machinery
- Do not drink alcohol
- Do not make important personal or business decisions or sign legal papers
- Avoid exercise, such as swimming, biking etc.

What Is IV Sedation?

IV sedation is used to relax you and make you more comfortable during your scan. Short-acting medicine is used to make you drowsy. You may be asleep but you will wake up with ease when the nurse or technologist talks to you. You may not be able to recall parts of or all of the scan. This is referred to as “moderate sedation.” You will not be “knocked out” or unconscious. The amount of sedation you receive depends on your state of health as well as how able you are to lie still. You will need to have an IV placed into the vein of your arm. The medicine will be given into the IV.

Day of Your Scan

- **Do not eat or drink for 6 hours before your scan.**
- If you are diabetic and take insulin you may take half of your scheduled morning insulin dose.
- You may take your other prescribed medicines before your scan with sips of water.
- IV sedation does not control pain. You will need to take your pain medicine as prescribed. Also, bring any prescribed inhalers that you use to the MRI scanner. Please tell the nurse about the medicines you have taken.
You will be asked to arrive 45 minutes before your scheduled scan. At that time, you will be taken to the patient changing room where you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. A locker will be supplied for your valuables.

The nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, and breathing, listen to your heart and lungs, and start an IV in a vein in your arm. You will be asked to lie down on the MRI table. The nurse will place a blood pressure cuff on your arm, an oxygen clip on your finger, oxygen prongs under your nose, and music headphones or ear plugs in your ears. After you have been placed on the MRI table, the nurse will give you the medicine to help you relax. The amount you receive is based on your weight and will be adjusted based on your response.

**During Your Scan**

The nurse will sedate you and will make sure you are relaxed before you go into the scanner. The nurse will be checking you from outside the scanner during the entire scan. The nurse will be able to see you and speak with you at any time. If you become restless or uncomfortable, you can speak to the nurse between scans. The nurse can come back into the room and give you more medicine as needed.

**After your Scan**

After your scan, you will be moved to a room to rest until you feel awake enough to go home (about 30 minutes). The nurse will check your heart rate, oxygen level, blood pressure, and breathing during this time.

**Follow-Up**

The day after your scan, the nurse will contact you to check if you had any problems or side effects after your scan and to assess how well your sedation worked.

**Questions**

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the MRI nurse at (608) 262-5276. If you reach our answering machine, please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as we can.