Sleep Dentistry and Sedation for Anxious Patients | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/sleep-dentistry/

Details:

Sleep dentistry, also called sedation dentistry, uses sedative medication to help you feel relaxed and drowsy during dental treatment. It is designed for people who feel anxious, nervous or phobic about visiting the dentist. At Core Dental we offer sleep dentistry options for nervous patients at selected practices, including Berwick, Epping and Wyndham, and we take extra time to help you feel comfortable and safe. Despite the name, you are not asleep unless general anaesthesia is used. Suitability depends on your medical history and an assessment, and results vary for each person.

What is sleep dentistry?

Sleep dentistry is a dental approach that uses sedative medications to place you in a relaxed, sleep-like state during treatment. It helps people with dental anxiety, nervousness or phobia receive the care they need more comfortably. Our approach starts with a conversation about what worries you, so we can plan your visit around it.

Are you actually asleep during sleep dentistry?

Despite the name, you are not actually asleep during sleep dentistry, except under general anaesthesia. With sedation you remain technically awake, able to respond to instructions, and you keep natural protective reflexes such as coughing and gagging.

Which sedation methods are used in sleep dentistry?

Sedation dentistry generally uses several techniques:

Intravenous (IV) sedation, the most common method, delivered through a small tube in the hand or arm with the dose adjusted for each patient.

Inhalation conscious sedation, using a sedative gas through a mask, which can suit people who are anxious about needles.

General anaesthesia, which induces a deep, sleep-like unconscious state and is used for complex cases.

The methods available differ between practices and clinicians, so ask which options are offered at your practice when you book.

How does IV sedation work?

IV sedation is delivered through a small plastic tube connected to a needle in the back of your hand or arm. The dose is adjusted for your needs, from minimal to deep sedation, and most people have little memory of the dental visit afterwards. Your care team monitors you throughout.

Who might benefit from sedation dentistry?

You may benefit from sedation dentistry if you:

have high anxiety about dental visits

have had traumatic dental experiences in the past

need invasive procedures such as multiple extractions, or dentistry at multiple sites

have trouble achieving numbness

have a strong gag reflex, or worry about gagging during impressions for crowns and bridges

are afraid of needles in the mouth

dislike the noises or smells often associated with dental care

Almost any patient who needs dental treatment for health or cosmetic reasons but has anxiety or fear about the procedure may benefit from conscious sedation, subject to a medical assessment.

Why might you choose sedation over a general anaesthetic?

Sedation has several features that people value:

Safety: you are technically awake, so you keep control of protective reflexes such as coughing and gagging.

Communication: you can still tell your dentist about any concerns, and we can offer reassurance and adjust your care.

Cost and recovery: sedation generally involves a lower fee and a shorter recovery and discharge than general anaesthesia, although this varies.

Your dentist and the clinician providing sedation will explain which approach suits your health and your treatment.

What is involved in sleep dentistry?

The usual steps are:

Contact our team to make a consultation appointment.

Meet the dental team and go through your medical history, so we can confirm that sedation is appropriate for you.

Choose your preferred sedation method. If you are scared of needles, we can discuss using sedative gas first to help you relax before any IV is placed.

Book your treatment appointment, knowing that you will be cared for in a safe and calm environment.

Ask what preparation applies to you, such as eating and drinking instructions, and how you will get home afterwards, because you should not drive after sedation.

What are the risks and limits of sedation?

All sedation carries risks, including drowsiness that lasts after your appointment, nausea, low blood pressure or slowed breathing, and rare allergic reactions. Sedation is not suitable for everyone, and your medical history, medicines and any health conditions will be reviewed. Sedation does not replace good oral health care at home, and treatment may still need several visits.

How much does sleep dentistry cost, and how can you pay?

Fees depend on the treatment you need, the type of sedation and the time involved, so we give you a written treatment plan and quote before treatment starts. We offer interest-free payment plans through Payright for amounts up to $20,000, over 3 to 30 months with fortnightly repayments, subject to eligibility and approval. HICAPS claiming is available on-site, and any rebate depends on your own health fund cover. Fees, offers and finance terms are as published in September 2026 and can change, so confirm the current written terms, what a quoted figure includes and any health fund rebate before booking or paying. See our dental payment plans page.

Where can you have sleep dentistry at Core Dental?

Our live practice pages list sleep dentistry or sedation options at Berwick , Epping and Wyndham . Availability can differ between practices, so call 13 13 16 to confirm where your treatment can take place.

Who provides sleep dentistry at Core Dental?

Your general dentist plans your treatment and talks through your options with you. Where general anaesthesia or specialist sedation is involved, the clinician providing it will explain their role. You can meet our team on our dentists and registered specialists page and check any practitioner's registration on the AHPRA register at ahpra.gov.au. See also our sleep dentistry (specialist care) page.

What should you do before you book?

A useful first step is to explain your concern, symptoms, timing and goals when you call or book. Bring relevant medical information and a current list of your medicines. Your practitioner can then assess your teeth, gums, bite and surrounding tissues, request imaging when clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you.

Ask what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, whether there are reasonable alternatives, what preparation and aftercare involve, and what risks or limitations apply. Treatment time, fees, recovery and maintenance vary with the diagnosis and the complexity of care. A written treatment plan lets you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed.

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms, and do not wait for a dental appointment. For severe tooth pain or swelling without these signs, contact us promptly on 13 13 16.

What does the law require of a dentist who sedates you?

Sedation is not something any dentist may simply decide to offer. It is one of the few areas of dental practice where the regulator controls who is permitted to do the work at all.

The Dental Board of Australia, the national board that registers every dentist in the country, sets this out plainly: "Only dentists, including dental specialists, whose registration is endorsed for conscious sedation can use this technique in their practice." An endorsement is a notation on a practitioner's registration, granted after the Board is satisfied they meet a separate standard, and it is additional to ordinary general registration as a dentist.

The Board's Registration standard for this endorsement covers three things. It sets the requirements to apply for the endorsement in the first place. It sets practice requirements for endorsed dentists, including the routes by which sedation may be administered and, as the Board puts it, "the specific requirements for intravenous route" — so an intravenous technique carries conditions that other routes do not. And it sets continuing obligations, which is the part patients rarely hear about.

Those continuing obligations are not a formality. In the Board's words, the standard "requires endorsed dentists to complete an approved competency based course in dental sedation and medical emergencies before applying to renew their registration." The training that matters is therefore not only sedation technique but the management of a medical emergency, and it has to be repeated, not completed once.

Endorsed dentists are also expected to work to an anaesthetists' document rather than a purely dental one. The Board states that they "need to be familiar with the Guidelines on Sedation and/or Analgesia for Diagnostic and Interventional Medical, Dental or Surgical Procedures (PS09 2014), Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)."

Source: Dental Board of Australia, Conscious Sedation, dentalboard.gov.au (accessed 3 November 2026).

How can you check your sedation dentist's registration yourself?

You do not have to take anyone's word for it, including ours.

Ahpra, the agency that administers registration for the national boards, publishes a register of every dental practitioner in Australia. It is public, free, and it shows a practitioner's current registration status. The same register records the specialty or specialties of dentists who hold specialist registration, so it is also the place to confirm a specialist title rather than an informal description of someone's interests.

The practical approach before any sedation appointment is a short one. Ask who will be administering the sedation, by what route, and whether their registration carries the conscious sedation endorsement. Then look the name up on the Ahpra register at ahpra.gov.au and read the record for yourself. Registration details change, and a page on any website — this one included — is a snapshot rather than a live record.

If something you are told does not match what the register shows, that mismatch is worth raising before treatment rather than after.

Source: Dental Board of Australia, Specialist Registration, dentalboard.gov.au (accessed 3 November 2026).

Frequently asked questions

Will I remember my treatment under sedation?

Most people have little memory of the visit with IV sedation, although you stay technically awake and can respond to instructions. Your dentist will explain what to expect for your sedation method.

Is sleep dentistry safe?

Sedation is used widely in dentistry, but all sedation carries risks. We review your medical history and medicines first, and you keep protective reflexes such as coughing and gagging under conscious sedation.

What if I am afraid of needles?

Tell us when you book. We can discuss using sedative gas first to help you relax before any IV is placed, and we take extra time to help nervous patients feel comfortable.

Can I drive home after sedation?

No. You should arrange for someone to take you home, and your team will give you instructions for the rest of the day. Ask about this when you book.

Is sedation available for children?

Our children's care starts with talking to your child's dentist about their needs. Call 13 13 16 to ask what is available, and read about children's dentistry .

What is an endorsement of registration?

It is a notation the Dental Board of Australia adds to a dentist's registration once they have met a separate standard for a defined area of practice. For sedation, the Board's position is that only dentists whose registration carries that notation may use the technique. It sits on top of general registration as a dentist rather than replacing it, and it appears on the public Ahpra register.

Does one endorsement cover every method of sedation?

Not uniformly. The Board's Registration standard addresses the routes by which sedation may be administered and sets out, in its own words, "the specific requirements for intravenous route". So the intravenous method carries conditions beyond those attaching to other routes. If you want to know exactly what applies to the technique proposed for you, ask which route is planned and what the standard requires for it.

Does an endorsed dentist have to keep training?

Yes, and recurrently. The Registration standard requires an endorsed dentist to complete an approved competency based course in dental sedation and medical emergencies before they apply to renew their registration. Because it is tied to renewal rather than to first registration, it is an ongoing obligation rather than a one-off qualification, and it deliberately covers medical emergencies alongside sedation technique.

What does "conscious" actually mean in the standard?

The Dental Board defines conscious sedation as "a technique used in dental practice to induce a depression of consciousness during which patients are able to respond purposefully to verbal commands or light tactile stimulation." Responsiveness is therefore part of the definition, not a side effect. That is the formal distinction between this and a general anaesthetic, and it is why the word "sleep" in everyday use can mislead.

Related services and further reading

Sleep dentistry suitability

Sleep dentistry (specialist care)

Children's dentistry

Children's dentistry and specialist paediatric dentists

Child Dental Benefits Schedule and bulk billing

Wisdom tooth extraction

General dentistry

Emergency dentistry

Dental payment plans

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

HICAPS on-site claiming, and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Sleep dentistry options listed at Berwick, Epping and Wyndham.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday mornings, Sunday closed
Clinics	Find your nearest practice

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

What is sleep dentistry at Core Dental?

Sleep dentistry, also called sedation dentistry, uses sedative medication to help you feel relaxed and drowsy during treatment. Core Dental offers sleep dentistry options for nervous patients at selected practices, after an assessment of your health.

Which Core Dental practices offer sleep dentistry?

The live pages for Core Dental Berwick, Epping and Wyndham list sleep dentistry or sedation options for nervous patients. Availability can differ between practices, so call 13 13 16 to confirm before you book.

Which sedation methods does Core Dental use?

Sedation dentistry generally uses intravenous sedation, inhalation sedation with a gas through a mask, and general anaesthesia for complex cases. The methods available vary by practice and clinician, so ask when you book at Core Dental.

Who may benefit from sedation at Core Dental?

People with high dental anxiety, past traumatic experiences, a strong gag reflex, fear of needles or a need for multiple extractions may benefit from sedation at Core Dental. We confirm suitability after reviewing your medical history.

Do patients stay awake under conscious sedation at Core Dental?

Under conscious sedation you are technically awake, able to respond to instructions and you keep protective reflexes such as coughing and gagging. Only general anaesthesia produces unconsciousness, and we explain which applies to you.

How do I start sleep dentistry at Core Dental?

Contact our team to make a consultation. We review your medical history, discuss sedation methods, and then book your treatment visit. Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au.

Does Core Dental offer payment plans for sedation treatment?

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free Payright plans up to $20,000 over 3 to 30 months, subject to eligibility and approval. HICAPS claiming is available on-site. Terms are as published in September 2026.