

# Entonox

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## Entonox for pain relief

Entonox is a drug used to relieve pain and is often used to treat pain during childbirth. It is also used widely by the ambulance service and in hospitals to relieve a variety of painful procedures and conditions.

## What is Entonox?

Entonox is the trade name for the mixture of 50% Oxygen and 50% Nitrous Oxide, also known as 'gas and air' or 'laughing gas'. It is a fairly strong pain killer, and works very quickly to control pain.

## When might Entonox be used?

Entonox is the ideal pain killer for short procedures and other hospital situations that cause discomfort. For example:

- Straightening of broken bones
- Stitching/suturing wounds
- Removal of drains and metal work
- Wound dressing changes
- Childbirth
- Bone marrow aspiration

## Who can use Entonox?

Anybody can use Entonox as long as they are able to understand simple instruction, hold the mouthpiece and breathe normally.

## How does Entonox work?

The exact way Entonox works is still not fully understood. However, it is believed that once it has been inhaled, Entonox travels to the brain and the spinal cord where it stops the pain from being felt.

## How is Entonox given?

Before you can be given Entonox, the nurse will complete a checklist with you to make sure that it is appropriate for you to use.

Entonox is a self-administered pain killer. A trained nurse or doctor will show you what to do. Entonox is given using a mouthpiece which you hold firmly between your teeth/lips to form a good seal. You will be asked to breathe deeply for 1 – 2 minutes before the procedure begins to ensure the pain killer is in your body. Entonox will only flow when you breathe in.

## What are the side effects of using Entonox?

**Dizziness** – Entonox can cause dizziness. This usually improves once you stop breathing the gas.

**Nausea** – Entonox can occasionally cause nausea, but this settles once you have stopped using it.

**Anaemia** – Continuous use of Entonox for longer than 6-8 hours may cause anaemia, vitamin deficiencies and reduced bone marrow function. These are rare side-effect and only in extreme circumstances is it a risk to patients.

## Can I drive or operate machinery after using Entonox?

It is recommended that patients who have received Entonox **do not** operate machinery for at least 12 hours after use. This is a legal requirement from the manufacturers (BOC). You are able to drive 30 minutes following the administration of Entonox as long as the nurse, doctor or physiotherapist has assessed you, although you may wish to ask someone to bring you to appointments in case of any problems following Entonox.

## Further information

For more information, please read the information sheet that comes with your drug or medicine.

## References

BOC medical [www.entonox.co.uk](http://www.entonox.co.uk)

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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