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INSPIRING HEALTH

RELAXATION AND SEDATION

Q. Is there anything that can help me with my fear of the dentist?

A. Yes. Some people are so frightened of the dentist that they will not go for dental treatment. They can overcome their fears with relaxation or sedation. Dentists today are sympathetic about these feelings, and you can ask your dental team about these ways to help.

Q. What is sedation?

A. Your dentist may recommend an intravenous or 'IV' sedation. This is given by injection, either in the back of your hand or in your arm. The dose will depend on the amount of treatment needed and how long it will take to complete.

Q. How will IV sedation in the surgery affect me?

A. You become drowsy and are not aware of having any treatment, but you are still able to co-operate with the dentist. The effects of sedative medicine take some time to wear off and your dentist will tell you how long the drugs will take to clear from your body. You won't be able to drink alcohol, drive or work machinery during this time.

Q. What else can help?

A. You can be helped to feel relaxed by 'relative analgesia', sometimes called 'inhalation sedation'. This means breathing in a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen ('gas and air') which quickly leads to a pleasant, relaxed feeling. The dental team puts you at ease at the same time, by talking softly and suggesting what you feel. You are still conscious all the time, although you may be a little drowsy, and any treatment given causes you no discomfort.

You breathe in the mixture through a nosepiece, which is very comfortable. You can't overdose on the gas, as the mixture quickly leaves the body if you breathe in one or two breaths of ordinary air. There are no after-effects either, and you can drive a car after about 15 minutes. Many dentists use this safe and effective technique.

Q. How does relaxation work?

A. When we are faced with a challenge or something we're afraid of, such as a visit to the dentist, our bodies produce chemicals which make us more anxious. However, we can train our bodies to work against this anxiety, by learning to relax. It's not possible to be anxious and relaxed at the same time, so learning relaxation helps control our anxiety.

If you are a mother, you may have learned some relaxation techniques in childbirth classes. In fact, almost anyone can learn them. You can practise at home. Some people find that meditation and yoga work well, too.

Q. What about hypnosis?

A. Hypnosis is a way of relaxing where you concentrate on suggestions of relaxation given by the hypnotist. It's a bit like daydreaming, although you are awake and in total control.

Q. How do I know which technique is right for me?

A. Talk to your dentist. Most people can use relaxation techniques, but relative analgesia and sedation may not be suitable for everyone. Your dentist will tell you. You also need to tell your dental team about any medicines you may be taking, whether or not they are prescribed by your doctor.

Q. How much does it cost?

A. Talk to your dentist, and discuss the costs fully before you commit yourself to treatment. Always get a written estimate before starting any treatment.

Q. Are there any other techniques that may help before I get to the dentist?

A. Some people need something more to help them overcome their fears. The dentist or doctor may give you a sedative medicine, either as a tablet or liquid, that you can take before your visit.

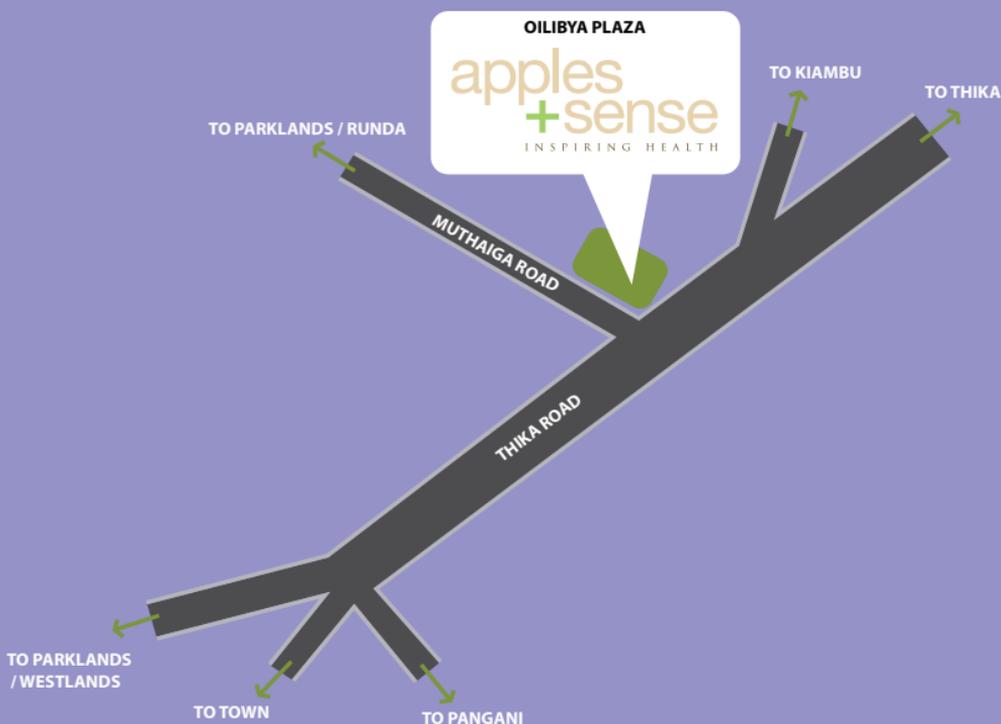
Q. How can I look after my teeth?

A. Orthodontic treatment can be done by many sorts of appliances, which most people call a 'brace'.

Q. What is a removable brace?

A. Follow this simple routine.

- Brush your teeth last thing at night and at least one other time during the day, with a fluoride toothpaste. This means cleaning all the surfaces of your teeth and it involves more than just brushing. You need to clean between your teeth too with 'interdental' brushes or floss. Your dental team will show you the best techniques.
- Cut down on how often you have sugary food and drink. It is better for your teeth if you have them just at mealtimes.
- Visit your dental team as often as they recommend. Remember, use your dental team for advice to help you avoid treatment rather than waiting for the problems to happen.



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1st Floor, Oilibya Plaza, Muthaiga.
P.O.Box 64829-00620, Nairobi, Kenya
0790 307 260 and 0780 367 367.
appointments@applesandsense.com