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# PATIENT EDUCATION

## BREATH MONITORING

This brochure explains how breath monitoring, also known as capnography, can help clinicians monitor a patient's breathing during a procedure requiring sedation or while on pain medication.

Capnography measures the level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in breath each time the patient exhales.

### **1. WHY IS BREATH MONITORING IMPORTANT?**

Medication can slow down breathing and heart rate. Breath monitoring alerts clinicians to small changes in breathing.

### **2. HOW DOES BREATH MONITORING WORK?**

A tube is fitted under the patient's nose which is connected to a monitor and also to oxygen supply, if needed. The plastic prongs in the nose and the "scoop" over the mouth capture samples of exhaled breath. The breath sample is sent to the monitor so that the CO<sub>2</sub> level can be continually measured and analyzed. If breathing becomes shallow or slows down, an alarm on the monitor will alert clinicians to the change.

### **3. THE ALARM ON THE MONITOR IS ANNOYING. IS IT NECESSARY?**

Yes. If an alarm sounds, breathing may be shallow. The alarm indicates that the patient should take a deep breath. The alarm is a reminder to breathe deeply. Alarms also alert clinicians to a change in breathing.

### **4. CAN THE PATIENT DRINK LIQUIDS WHILE BEING MONITORED?**

Routine post-procedure activity, like sipping water or eating ice chips, does not interfere with capnography monitoring. Whether the patient can have water or ice chips is determined by the clinician.

### **5. HOW LONG ARE PATIENTS MONITORED?**

Generally, patients are monitored until the physician believes there is no longer a risk of slow or shallow breathing.

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