



Royal College
of Midwives

An introduction to Entonox

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Entonox

Entonox is a medical gas
50%Oxygen 50% Nitrous Oxide –
used as a form of inhalation pain relief
in many medical settings, in
Obstetrics it is used in Labour.

‘Although nitrous oxide is considered
a safe option for pain relief during
childbirth, prolonged exposure to the
gas could lead to vitamin
B₁₂ deficiency and anaemia and has
been linked to fertility problems. (*BMJ*
27 January 2023)



Nitrous Oxide is classed as a hazardous substance, which if exposure to such substances is not properly controlled may cause ill health in a number of ways.

It is a legal requirement under the COSHH regulations that staff are not exposed to hazardous substances, such as nitrous oxide, above the

Working Exposure Limit (WEL).

For Nitrous Oxide, the exposure limit is set at 100ppm,8-hour time weighted average.



So, what has been happening?

During August 2018 and December 2022, there were 11 notifications to the HSE from seven NHS trusts and one private hospital, in relation to nitrous oxide - almost all relating to maternity units.

Recently more trusts have been added to the list. Some have withdrawn Entonox as an option for medical gas analgesia, in maternity and other clinical settings, whilst alterations/upgrades to the extraction of Nitrous Oxide have been made.



So, what has been happening?

This has attracted the attention of the press with various TV and social media reporting

NB: The RCM are **not advocating** the withdrawal of Entonox as an option for Women to use as a medical gas analgesic during pregnancy.

RCM call for all NHS Trust's Health Boards and private employers to perform their legal duties and provide safe healthy working environments undertaking COSHH mandated monitoring in **all** areas including maternity services in acute and community settings.



RCM Team

National

- RCM TU Exec director Dr Suzanne Tyler
- RCM Director Field Services Lynn Collins
- RCM H&S Advisor – Lesley Wood
- Professional Advisor – Amanda Marsden
- Legal Team

Regional

- Regional Heads
- Regional officers/Organisers

Local

- You – Our H&S reps
- RCM Branches
- Members



RCM response

Collective

We have written to HSE

Written to all CEO's seeking assurance that Board has been cited and correct measures are being taken.

Written to all H&S reps gathering information from employers

Legal team – regular meetings.

Best practice – developing tailor-made training for H&S reps.

Entonox information hub on RCM website with legal FAQ's

Individual

Legal team referrals for any potential PI claims



So, what can you do?

- Understanding the process
- Relationships - you are not alone
- Risk Assessments
- COSHH
- WELs
- Raising concerns
- Communicating
- Speaking to members





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Thank you for listening
any questions ?

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