



Pain Relief During Labor

As a laboring mother you will be offered a variety of ways to help you tolerate the pain of labor. The safest labor pain relief for both you and your baby is without any chemicals. However, many women find this intolerable. The following information explains methods, benefits, and their risks.

1. **Psycho-prophylaxis, Lamaze, or controlled breathing**: reduce labor discomfort without any drugs. Some women find this very successful. There are no risks to this form of pain relief.
2. **Narcotic IV or IM**: short acting narcotic drugs help with labor pain and are easy to give, work quickly, and are inexpensive. The drawbacks are that they don't completely eliminate labor pain, and in rare cases can cause breathing difficulties in the baby after delivery.
3. **Paracervical Block**: is a shot in the cervix, with local pain medicine (like novocaine). This will greatly reduce labor discomfort, they are easy to give, work quickly, and are inexpensive. There is a small risk of a paracervical block causing a temporary decrease in the baby's heart rate. Once a paracervical block is given, a woman cannot receive an epidural because they may get too much local anesthesia medicine and have side effects (there is a small extra charge for a paracervical block).
4. **Epidural**: is a form of anesthesia, injected into the spinal area and is very effective in reducing labor pain, causes no breathing difficulties to the baby, keeps the mother and baby awake, and usually lasts as long as labor continues. Because it is more difficult to give, it has more risks. Sometimes, even though it is properly given, it doesn't relieve pain adequately. If this happens the catheter may need to be reinserted. Occasionally a severe headache follows its use. This may last for 2 to 5 days and can be very debilitating; Rarely, temporary total paralysis may occur. If this should happen it can be very frightening and dangerous to the mother and the baby. Because of these potential dangers laboring mothers having an epidural will need to have an IV started (because of the extra attention required, the cost of administering an epidural is not included in the package cost of the delivery).

We hope this gives you some idea of what pain support is available to you while in labor. Please discuss these options with your doctor at the time of your prenatal visit.