

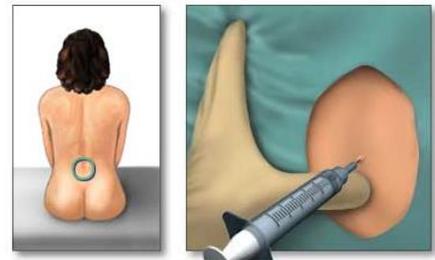
## Epidural for Pain Control during Labour

This fact sheet is for information only, and is for women who may receive an epidural during labour.



### What is an Epidural?

- An epidural is a way of giving medication to make labour and delivery less painful.
- If you are having an epidural to control pain during labour, an Anesthesiologist will insert a small tube into your back between the bones of your spine. This tube is called an epidural catheter.
- Pain medication flows through the tube and blocks pain in the nerves of the spine, which makes your lower abdomen and uterus numb.
- It takes about 20 minutes to insert the tube, and you will start to feel less pain about 20 minutes after the anesthetic has been injected.
- Not all women can have epidurals. Some medical conditions make the procedure risky or impossible.



### Before You Get the Epidural

- The Anesthesiologist will ask you detailed questions about your health, and perform a physical examination. If you and your Anesthesiologist determine that an epidural is the right choice for you, you will be asked to give consent prior to the epidural procedure.
- You will be given an intravenous (IV) to give you fluid.
- You will have to sit in a position that will allow insertion of the epidural.

### What are the Advantages of an Epidural?

- It is an excellent form of pain control during labour.
- It is safe for you and your baby.
- You can breastfeed your baby after the epidural.
- Your mind stays clear. You may be aware of your contractions, but feel no pain.
- If you require a caesarean section, stronger medication can be given through the epidural catheter.

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# Epidural for Pain Control during Labour

## Common Side Effects

- Pain and bruising where the epidural was inserted.
- Temporary difficulty in passing urine. All patients with an epidural receive a urinary catheter to help them urinate.
- Temporary leg weakness.
- Inadequate pain control (1 in 7 patients) which may require:
  - Extra medication through the epidural.
  - Removing and re-trying the epidural in a different location.
  - Extra intravenous medications.

## Uncommon Side Effects

- Significant drop in blood pressure (1 in 50 patients)
- Severe Headache (1 in 100 patients)

## Rare Complications

- Temporary nerve damage, such as leg weakness or a numb patch on your leg/foot (1 in 1000 patients)
- A higher-than expected-spread of medication which can affect breathing muscles (1 in 13,000 patients)

## Very Rare Complications

- Epidural infection (1 in 50,000 patients)
- Meningitis (1 in 100,000 patients)
- Accidental unconsciousness (1 in 100,000 patients)
- Blood clot with spinal cord damage (1 in 170,000 patients)
- Permanent nerve damage with possible paralysis (1 in 250,000 patients)

For more information, speak with your Anesthesiologist.

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Notes: