

WHICH ARE THE BENEFITS?

- The epidural enables an exhausted mother to relax & enjoy participating in the birthing process.
- Studies show that labour pain relief can improve the oxygen supply to your baby.
- Having an epidural in place also means that you have the ability to get a quick anaesthetic if you need a caesarean section.

Every effort will always be made to ensure your comfort



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LABOUR ANALGESIA



Welcome your baby with a smile



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INTRODUCTION

This leaflet explains what to expect when you have an epidural catheter placed for painless delivery

WHAT IS AN EPIDURAL ?

The nerves from your uterus and cervix pass through an area in your back close to your spine, called the "epidural space".

To establish an epidural an anaesthetist injects local anaesthetic through a fine plastic tube (an epidural catheter) into the epidural space. As a result, the nerve messages are blocked, resulting in pain relief. An epidural pump allows local anaesthetic to be given continuously through the epidural catheter and adjusted according to the need of the patient.

- The drugs given are carefully controlled.
- When the epidural is stopped, full sensation will return

WHEN IS AN EPIDURAL STARTED?

When labour pain starts, epidural is usually given on demand at your obstetrician's discretion.



HOW IS AN EPIDURAL PUT?

1. You will be asked to sit up or lie on your side, bending forwards to curve your back. It is important to keep still while the epidural is put in.
2. Local anaesthetic is injected. A special epidural needle is pushed through the numb area and a thin plastic catheter is passed through the needle into your epidural space. The needle is then removed, leaving only the catheter in your back.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING LABOUR EPIDURAL ANALGESIA?

Once the catheter is in place, initial medication is injected through the catheter followed by infusion of medication via an automated pump.

The medication works gradually over next 10 to 15 minutes. Initially you may notice that the pain during contractions is less intense and lasts for a shorter duration, until eventually all you feel is the tightening of contraction. You may not feel the contraction at all; it differs for every woman.

ARE THERE ANY SIDE-EFFECTS ?

The anaesthesiologist takes special precautions to prevent complications. Although side-effects are rare, they occasionally include the following:

Shivering:

Shivering may occur and it is a common reaction. Sometimes it happens during labour and delivery, even if you haven't received any epidural.

Decreased blood pressure:

You will receive intravenous fluids and your blood pressure will be carefully monitored and corrected if needed.

Mild itching:

If it becomes bothersome, it can be treated with anti allergy drugs.

Local anaesthetic reaction:

Local anaesthetic reactions are extremely rare. However, be sure to tell your anaesthesiologist if you ever had any allergic reaction to local anaesthetic medications.

Backache:

This is common during pregnancy & delivery. It is NOT related to having an epidural

Headaches:

Minor headaches are common during labour & delivery even without an epidural. Do not worry. It can be treated.