



PAIN MANAGEMENT

DURING LABOR & DELIVERY



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PART ONE:

VAGINAL DELIVERY

Having a baby is a special time. There are many choices to help with pain during your labor. The anesthesia team will help you feel comfortable during labor.



Non-Medicated Techniques:

There are many ways to manage pain in labor. Some women do not want to use pain medicine. Other choices include Lamaze, acupuncture, water baths, walking, massage, or listening to music. These options may relax cramped muscles or help with back pain.

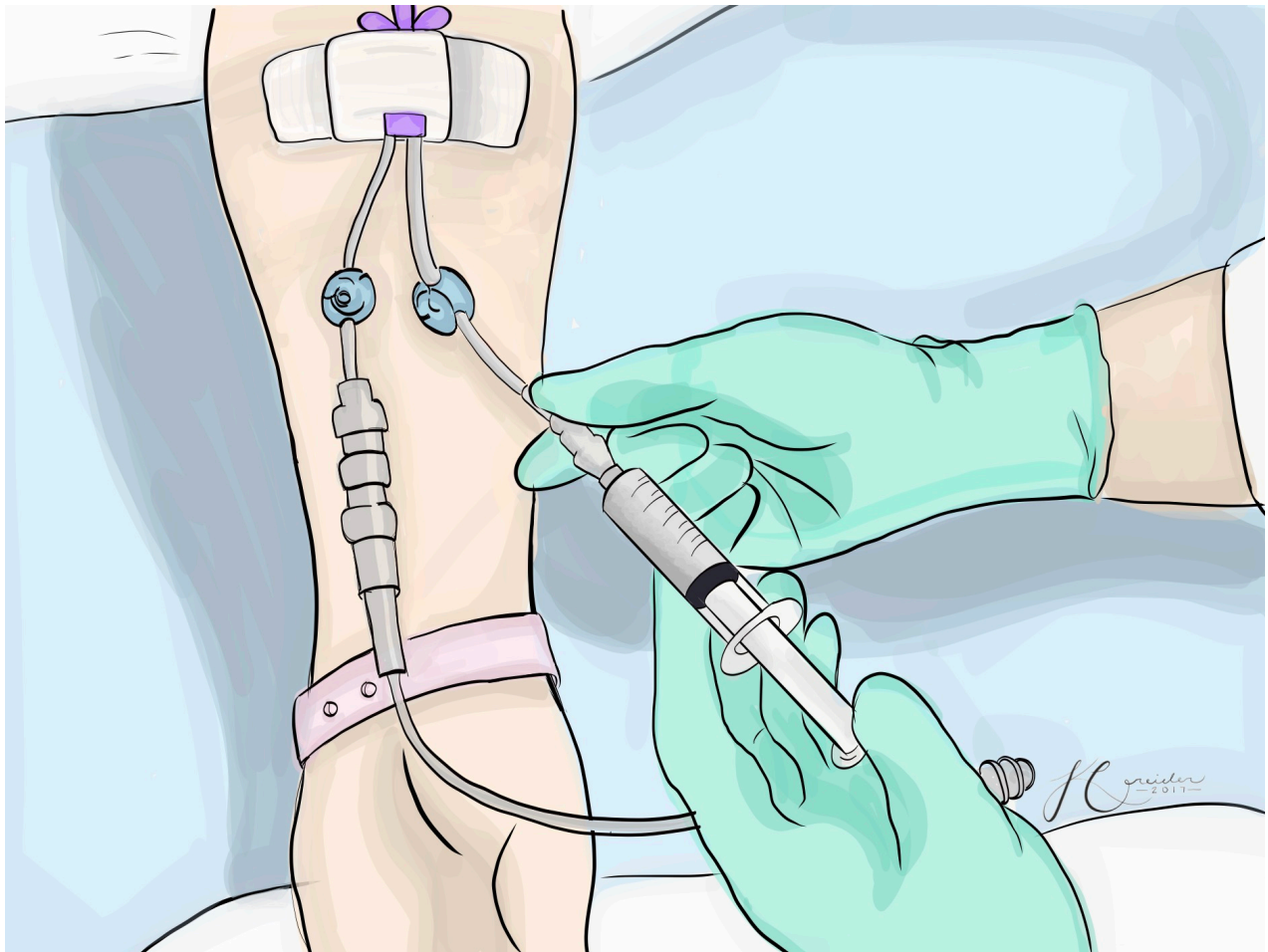
Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You may have less anxiety.
- You may have less pain in early labor.
- There are not a lot of side effects for you or the baby.
- You can practice these techniques before you have the baby.

Risks:

- You may feel more pain as your labor goes on.



IV Pain Medications:

Pain medicine can be given through a small plastic tube in a vein in your arm. This is called IV medicine. There are different kinds of pain medicine your doctor can give you. You can use the IV pain medicine more than once while in labor. The pain medicine can make your baby sleepy or make it hard for the baby to breathe if given right before delivery. Common IV pain medicines are Fentanyl and Demerol.

Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- Most hospitals have this medicine.
- The medicine works fast. It takes about 5-10 minutes.
- The medicine works well during early labor.

Risks:

- IV pain medicine can make you nauseous.
- IV pain medicine can make you throw up.
- IV pain medicine can make you sleepy.
- IV pain medicine can make it hard to breathe. This is rare.
- You could have an allergy to IV pain medicine. This is rare.
- IV pain medicine can reach the baby. This may make it harder for the baby to breathe after delivery.
- IV pain medicine may change how the baby's heart beats during labor. This happens more if you get a lot of IV pain medicine.



Inhaled Pain Medicine (Nitrous Oxide):

Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas) has been used for years in Europe. It is now being used in some hospitals in the US. During contractions, you hold a mask to your face and breathe in the medicine. You take the mask off your face when the contraction ends. It helps women feel “out of it” and relaxed. It is useful during early labor or for the last few pushes. There is not a lot of data about its safety when used for a long time in labor.

Common Risks and Benefits:

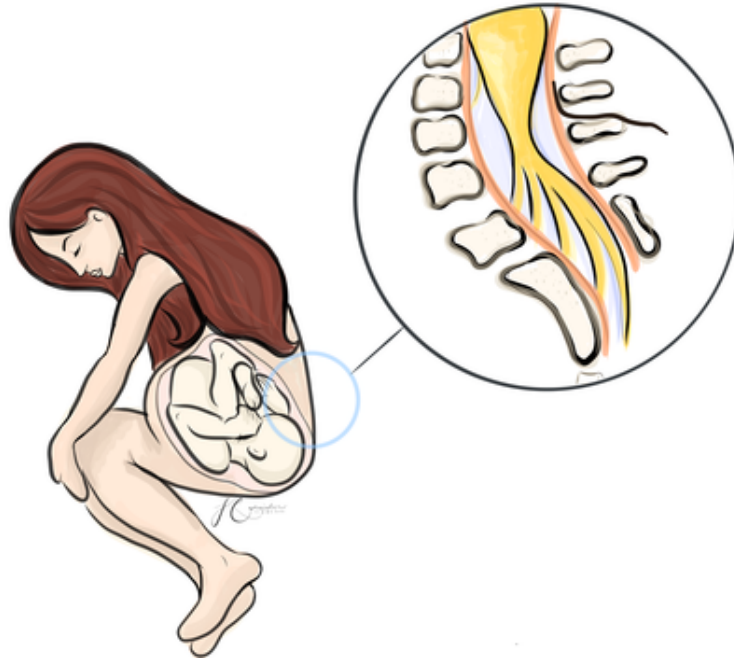
Benefits:

- You may feel some pain relief.
- You may have less anxiety.
- You may feel more relaxed.
- You are in control since you breathe in the medicine.
- The medicine may work during early labor. It may help for the last few pushes.
- This medicine does not affect your stomach muscles. You can still push out the baby.

Risks:

- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- The medicine can make you sleepy and dizzy.
- This medicine can get to the baby. Scientists are studying how safe the medicine is for the baby.
- If you have Vitamin B-12 deficiency, do not use this medicine.

**Last year the government put out a warning about certain medicines like this one. They are not sure how safe some medicines are for pregnant women. You should talk to your doctor about this. Your doctor can help you decide if the medicine is right for you. Talk to your doctor about the risks of these medicines. <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm532356.htm>*



Epidural Anesthesia:

An epidural is a small tube in the lower back that takes away labor pain. Medicine is put in the tube to make you numb in your belly and legs. You will still be able to move around in bed with an epidural. You are not allowed to walk with an epidural because you may fall. You can get an epidural at any time in labor if you are able to sit still. You may not be able to have an epidural if you have a bleeding problem, if you have had surgery in your back, or you have heart problems.

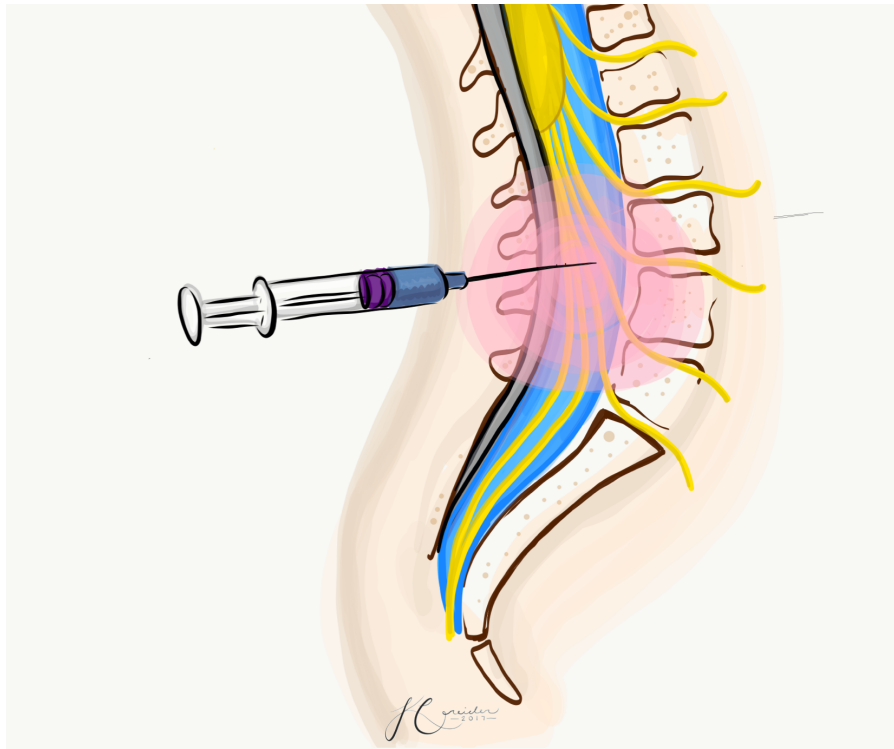
Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You will be awake and comfortable for the birth of your baby.
- It takes about 15-30 minutes for the medicine to work.
- An epidural can help you rest and feel relaxed.
- Epidurals do not increase the risk of C-section.
- Some data shows you are less likely to have depression after giving birth with an epidural.
- If you need a C-section, an epidural can be used. It will make you numb and comfortable for surgery.
- Epidurals do not cause long term back pain.

Risks:

- The medicine can lower your blood pressure or make you itchy.
- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- You could have an allergy to the medicine. This is rare.
- You may have bleeding, an infection, or trouble breathing. This is VERY rare.
- The epidural tube may not be in the right spot. The epidural tube can slip into a vein or the spinal fluid in your back.
- It may not work well. If it does not work well, you may need your epidural replaced.
- You may feel a bruise where the tube is placed.
- You may get a headache. You might need treatment for the headache before you go home.
- The epidural may damage nerves or tissues. This is VERY rare. It happens 1 in 20,000 epidurals. If a nerve is hurt, you may feel numb or tingly even after the epidural wears off.



Spinal Blocks

A spinal nerve block is most often used for C-sections. They may be used for vaginal births if there isn't enough time to get an epidural (the baby is coming out soon). A small dose of medicine is put in the spinal fluid in your lower back. The medicine numbs the nerves that cause pain. The medicine works fast because it goes right into the spinal fluid.

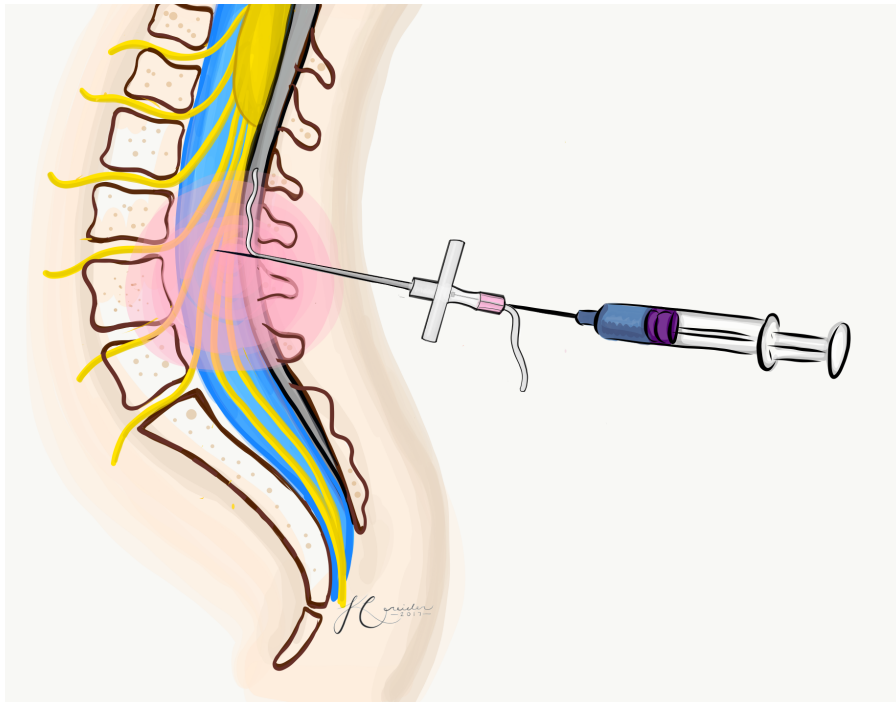
Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You will be awake and comfortable for the birth of your baby.
- Pain relief is fast. It takes about 5-10 minutes for the medicine to work.

Risks:

- The medicine can lower your blood pressure or make you itchy.
- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- You could have an allergy to the medicine. This is rare.
- You may have bleeding, an infection, or trouble breathing. This is VERY rare.
- You may feel a bruise at the site of the spinal block.
- You may get a headache. You might need treatment for the headache before you go home.
- The spinal block may damage nerves or tissues. This is VERY rare. It happens 1 in 20,000 spinal blocks. If a nerve is hurt, you may feel numb or tingly even after the spinal wears off.



Combined Spinal & Epidural Blocks

Your doctor may place a spinal block and epidural tube. The spinal works very fast to give pain relief. The epidural tube can continue to give medicine during labor.

Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You will be awake and comfortable for the birth of your baby.
- The medicine works fast. It takes about 5-10 minutes.
- This can help you rest and feel relax before having your baby.
- An epidural can be used if you have to have a c-section. It will make you numb. It can also help make you more comfortable during surgery. To learn more about c-sections, click [**here**](#).

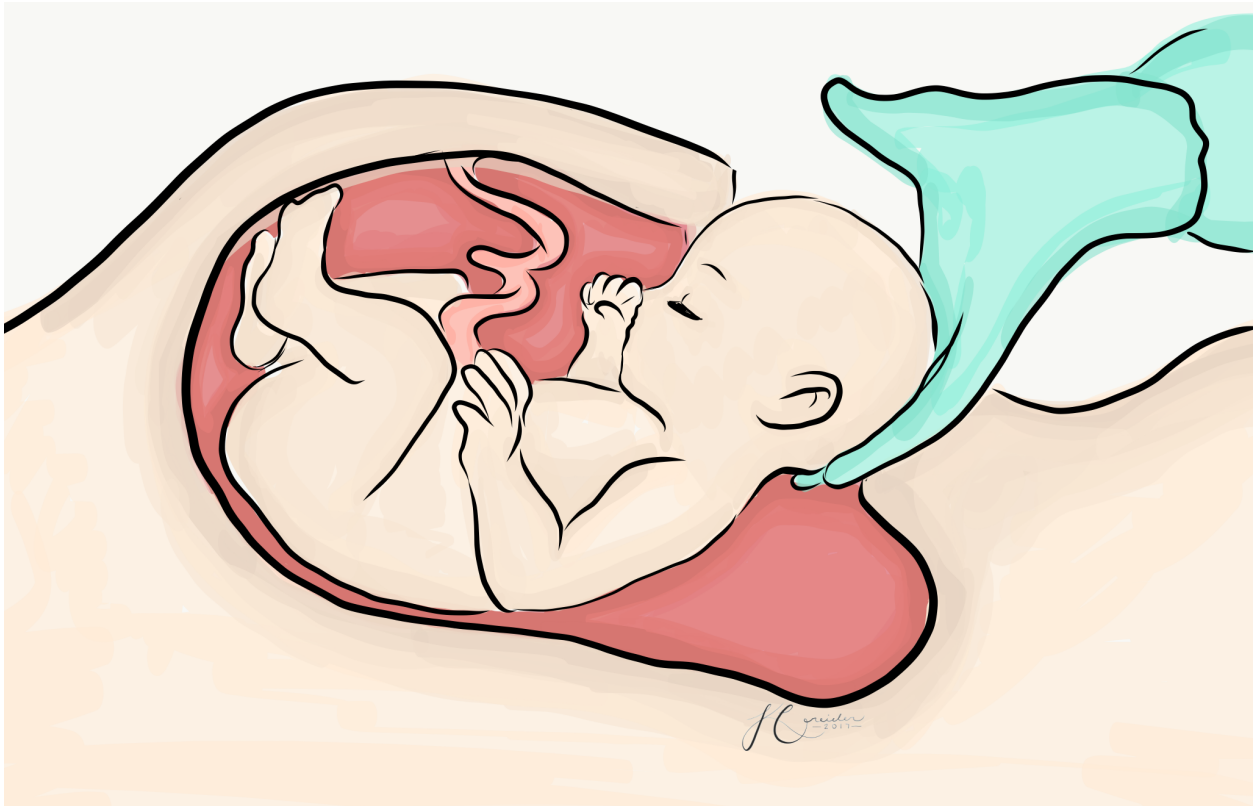
Risks:

- The medicine might lower your blood pressure. You may feel like you need to throw up. You may throw up. It might make you itchy. These side effects are common.
- Rare risks are bleeding, infection, nerve injury, or trouble with breathing.
- If you are allergic to the medicine, you might have a reaction. This is rare.
- The tube might need to be moved if it isn't in the right place or isn't helping your pain.
- These do not cause long term back pain.
- You might feel a bruise where they placed the tube. This normally lasts a few days.
- You might get a headache. This happens in 1 of every 100 epidurals. You might need treatment for the headache before you go home.
- The procedure might damage nerves or tissues. This is very rare. It happens in 1 of every 20,000 epidurals. When a nerve is hurt you might feel numb or tingly. The nerve might not work right.



PART TWO: **CESAREAN** DELIVERY

There are different types of anesthesia for a c section. Most women have an epidural or spinal nerve block. Some women have general anesthesia to go off to sleep. Your anesthesia doctor will help to choose the best option. Your breathing, blood pressure, and heart will be watched by the doctor during surgery. You will breathe in oxygen through a mask. The doctor will stay with you to keep you safe during surgery.



Spinal Block for C-Section

A spinal nerve block is most often used for C-sections. A small dose of medicine is put in the spinal fluid in your lower back. The medicine numbs the nerves that cause pain. You will be numb from your breasts to your toes. This keeps you from feeling anything sharp during the surgery. You will still feel pressure and movements. You can breathe on your own and move your arms. You will be awake for the birth of your baby. The medicine works fast because it goes right into the spinal fluid. The numbness lasts 2-4 hours and then wears off.

Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You will be awake and comfortable for the birth of your baby.
- It takes about 5-10 minutes for the medicine to work.
- You can have someone in the room to support you during the C-section.
- Some women can do “skin-to-skin” with their baby while the doctors finish surgery.
- Spinals do not cause long term back pain.

Risks:

- The medicine can lower your blood pressure or make you itchy.
- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- You could have an allergy to the medicine. This is rare.
- You may have bleeding, an infection, or trouble breathing. This is VERY rare.
- You may feel a bruise at the site of the spinal block.
- You may get a headache. You might need treatment for the headache before you go home.
- The spinal block may damage nerves or tissues. This is VERY rare. It happens 1 in 20,000 spinal blocks. If a nerve is hurt, you may feel numb or tingly even after the spinal wears off.

Combined Spinal & Epidural for C- Section

Your doctor may place a spinal block and epidural tube for a C-Section. The spinal works very fast to make you numb for surgery. The epidural tube can be used to give you more medicine if needed. This helps if the surgery is long. You doctor may use a combine spinal & epidural if you have had many C-section or other belly surgery in the past.

Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- You will be awake and comfortable for the birth of your baby.
- It takes about 5-10 minutes for the medicine to work.
- If you need more medicine during surgery, the epidural tube can be used.
- The epidural tube can be used for pain relief after surgery.

Risks:

- The medicine can lower your blood pressure or make you itchy.
- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- You could have an allergy to the medicine. This is rare.
- You may have bleeding, an infection, or trouble breathing. This is VERY rare.
- You may feel a bruise at the site of the spinal block.
- The epidural tube may not be in the right spot. The epidural tube can slip into a vein or the spinal fluid in your back.
- You may get a headache. You might need treatment for the headache before you go home.
- The procedure may damage nerves or tissues. This is VERY rare. It happens 1 in 20,000 times. If a nerve is hurt, you may feel numb or tingly even after the spinal wears off.

Epidural Anesthesia for C-Section

If you have an epidural tube put in during labor, it can sometimes be used for a C-section. Medicine can be put into the tube that will make you numb for surgery. This strong medicine makes you numb from you breasts to your toes. You will still be able to feel pressure and tugging during surgery. You will not feel anything sharp. It takes about 10-15 minutes for the medicine to make you numb enough for surgery.



General Anesthesia for C-Section

General anesthesia medicines make you sleep so you don't feel pain during surgery. A general anesthetic may be used in an emergency when there is not enough time to place a spinal or epidural. It may also be used if you can't get an epidural or spinal due to a medical condition. After you are asleep, the doctor will help you breath by putting a breathing tube in your windpipe.

Common Risks and Benefits:

Benefits:

- This is the fastest way to make you sleep for surgery. It takes less than 3 minutes.
- You won't feel any pain during surgery.
- An Anesthesia doctor will monitor your breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen level during surgery.

Risks:

- The medicine can lower your blood pressure or make you itchy.
- The medicine can make you nauseous or throw up.
- You could have an allergy to the medicine. This is rare.
- It may be hard for the doctor to put in a breathing tube. This is rare.
- You may have a chipped tooth or split lip. This is rare.
- You might be aware of voices during your surgery. This is VERY rare.
- You may have changes in your heart rhythm, a heart attack or stroke. This is VERY rare.

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