

## **Prenatal Education: Topic #4: Possible Effects of Pain Medication and Anesthesia:**



### **Pain medications and anesthesia in labor have been shown to have detrimental effects on labor progress, the infant, and breastfeeding:**

Pain medications and anesthesia in labor are associated with:

1. Longer labors, more interventions, higher rate of cesareans and vacuum-assisted deliveries.
2. Respiratory difficulties for some babies.
3. Some babies may be less alert to breastfeed and have an uncoordinated or weak suck, thus may have greater weight loss and more jaundice.
4. There may be a delay in milk production and lower volumes of milk.

### **Research shows that staying out of bed and remaining active helps you have a quicker, easier birth.**

1. Walking and staying active during labor helps mothers feel more relaxed and in control and helps stimulate contractions.
2. Being upright and out of bed causes gravity to help bring your baby down.
3. Sitting on the birthing ball, rather than the bed, takes pressure off your tailbone and lets your pelvis open wider for the baby.

### **There are many ways to help you through labor without pain medications and epidurals, and with no detriment to the labor or the baby. In fact, these methods will optimize labor progress, infant health, and breastfeeding success.**

1. Have a helper who is experienced with childbirth. This may be a friend, family member, or a doula.
2. Using the shower or tub is relaxing, helps labor progress, and helps relieve pain.
3. Take a childbirth class where you can learn about labor, breathing, and relaxation techniques.
4. Stay at home in early labor as long as possible, and call your provider before you come to the hospital.
5. Attitude is important: see labor not as something that happens to you, rather it is the work you do to deliver your baby!
6. Playing music and having a calm, dim environment may help with relaxation.
7. What you think about during labor can really help you through it: each contraction brings you closer to your baby; labor is a normal, healthy process; your body is well-designed for this wonderful process; you are bringing a new person into the world!



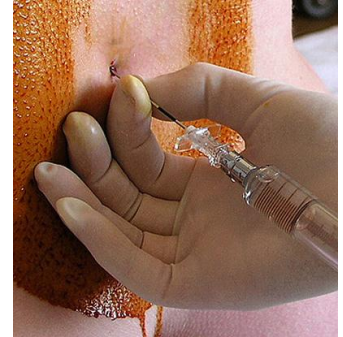
***...to learn more, continue on the next page!***

## **Prenatal Education: Possible Effects of Pain Medications and Anesthesia**

**Pain medications and anesthesia in labor have been shown to have detrimental effects on labor progress, the infant, and breastfeeding. These detrimental effects include:**



- ▶ Prolonged labor. *Am J Obstet Gynecol* 2002;186:S31-77
  - ▶ Your blood pressure may drop, giving your baby less blood flow; this lowers his oxygen levels, and could lead to fetal distress. *JAOA* 106(12)Dec 2006
  - ▶ You may have difficulty urinating. *AmJObstetGyn*2002(186)
  - ▶ Decreased infant alertness, ability, and readiness to feed. *J Hum Lact* 15(3)1999
  - ▶ Your baby may have trouble breathing. *JPerinatol* 2003;5
  - ▶ Disorganized infant suck. *J Hum Lact* 16(1),2000
  - ▶ Depressed infant reflexes including sucking. *Birth* 2001
  - ▶ Delayed milk onset. *J Am Diet Assoc* 1999;99:450-454
  - ▶ Decreased milk volumes. *Int J Obstet Anesth* 2004 Jan 13(1):25-9
  - ▶ Shortened duration of breastfeeding. *Anesthes* 2005;103(6)
  - ▶ Increased infant weight loss. *Pediatrics* 2003;1112:607-619
  - ▶ Higher cesarean section rate. *AmJObstetGyn* 2002;186:S31-68
- ▶ More likely to need forceps or vacuum extraction. *JAMA*1998;280:2105-10
  - ▶ More likely to need Pitocin augmentation of labor. *Am J Obstet Gynecol* 2002; 186:S81-93
  - ▶ Greater incidence of fever in labor, which may lead to antibiotics. *Am J Perinatol* 1997;14:83-6
  - ▶ Greater incidence of your baby being born with a fever, getting blood tests, IVs and antibiotics. *ACOG* 2002 (100)1



**Research shows that non-interventive birthing practices accomplish:**

- Faster, easier births. *Brit J of Anesth*, 2004;93(4):505-11
- Healthier, more active and alert mothers and newborns. *Cochrane* 2004(2):CD000111
- Mother and baby are more ready to breastfeed. *Cochrane Rev* 2000; *J Hum Lact* 1997

**There are many things that help in labor besides pain medications and epidurals. These methods help your labor go faster and give the baby the best start in life: stay active, use breathing and relaxation, & have helpers! These help labor progress, infant health, & breastfeeding success.**

- Attitude is important: see labor not as something that happens to you, rather it is the work you do to deliver your baby!
- What you think about during labor can really help you through it: each contraction brings you closer to your baby; labor is a normal, healthy process; your body is well-designed for this wonderful process; you are bringing a new person into the world!
- Stay out of bed and upright, walking, standing and showering. Use gravity to help bring your baby down!
- Telemetry monitoring: this type of monitoring allows you more mobility.
- Off the monitor: brief checks of your baby's heartbeat allow you freedom to move!
- Walking keeps you upright plus stimulates your contractions. It also keeps you off your tailbone, which opens more space for your baby to come out.
- Use a birthing ball to sit on or lean over. This helps relieve back pressure, helps you stay upright, allows your helpers to massage your back, and helps your pelvis open for the baby.
- Use the rocking chair and change your position often.
- Use the shower. Use of water in labor reduces pain. If you have back discomfort, point the shower spray over your back. If you want to sit while in the shower, you may use the ball or shower chair.
- Use the birthing tub. The motion and warmth of the water lessens pain. Warm water also helps you tissues stretch so there's less tearing. It makes a comfortable transition for the baby and can speed labor.
- Have a doula. A doula is a person trained and experienced in helping women through labor; she'll give you support and guidance. Your nurse can call one for you. Having a doula has been shown to shorten labor, decrease complications, and increase breastfeeding success.
- Take a childbirth class with your partner so you can learn and practice breathing, relaxation, and other techniques to help in labor. Have a coach to help and encourage you. Practice these things before labor.
- Playing music and having a calm, dim environment may help with relaxation.
- Sit on the toilet: not only for emptying bladder and bowel, this position helps pelvic opening.
- Talk with your provider if you desire other ways to help you through labor.

