

Epidural Information for Patients

What is Epidural Labour Pain Relief?

- The most popular and most effective form of pain relief during labour
- Proven safe for both the mother and the unborn baby
- Many women are able to walk while receiving epidural labour pain relief

How is an Epidural Administered?

- It is administered by an anaesthesiologist
- He/ she will freeze a small area in the lower part of your back
- A small needle is introduced and advanced into the epidural space
- A tiny tube is passed through the needle into the space and the needle is removed. The tube is taped into place so that it will not move
- Small amounts of medication (anaesthetic) are painlessly injected through the tube and into the epidural space, causing relief from the pain
- The tiny tube is removed following your baby's birth



How Will You Feel?

- The medication will relieve the pain of labour
- Although the pain is relieved, you will still feel the pressure associated with the pushing (2nd) stage of labour

What are Possible Complications Associated with Epidurals?

- Epidurals are EXTREMELY safe, however there is a SMALL risk of complications
- The MOST COMMON is that it may not work and therefore, need to be repeated
- There may be some bruising associated with the injection but this should cause little to no discomfort and clear up quickly
- REMOTE chance of infection
- OCCASIONAL back discomfort, although this is more often a result of the birth process and NOT the epidural
- If the needle goes into the spinal fluid as opposed to the epidural space, a headache may develop. This is NOT common and the anaesthesiologists have a procedure to rapidly relieve the headache

References:

Adapted from "Epidural Information for Patients" by David Campbell, MD, MSc, FRCPC – Professor and Chairman Department of Anaesthesiology, Director of Obstetric Anaesthesiology University of Saskatchewan and Saskatoon Health Region

Picture adapted from http://pennhealth.com/health_info/pregnancy/000168.htm