

This list is not exhaustive. Please talk to your trusted health care provider further about your options and all possible benefits and risks.

# Medication for Pain Management



## During Labor and Birth

### Narcotic

#### Type:

Morphine  
Fentanyl  
Nubain  
Stadol

#### When/How Given:

- Early/active labor by IV or intramuscular injection.
- Fentanyl may also be given in spinal/epidural.

#### Advantages:

- Not considered harmful to the mother/baby when given at the proper time and dosage.
- Takes the "edge" off of the pain.

#### Possible Side Effects and Disadvantages:

- May cause drowsiness in the mother.
- The mother may experience nausea (rare).
- Mother may feel less in control.
- Sometimes a temporary decrease in strength and frequency of contractions occurs.
- Depending on when given, Morphine may cause respiratory depression in the baby. If this occurs, the antidote Narcan can be administered and the side effects are immediately reversed.
- Morphine may cause the baby temporary difficulty with breastfeeding.

### Local Blocks

#### Type:

All local anesthetic-type drugs, such as Novacaine used by dentists.

#### When/How Given:

Medication is injected into the perineum/skin immediately before or after delivery.

#### Advantages:

Local numbness for performing episiotomy and/or suturing episiotomy or laceration.

#### Possible Side Effects and Disadvantages:

- Allergic reaction (rare).
- Short acting.

### Regional Anesthesia

Such as dilute local anesthetics, combination narcotics, and local anesthetics, or more concentrated local anesthetics alone. The physician/midwife and anesthesiologist will help the mother choose which type will best meet her needs, based on the stage and situation during labor and the amount of pain relief she requires.

#### Type:

**Intrathecal  
(Narcotic and/or  
Local Anesthetic)**

#### When/How Given:

- Established for labor pain not relieved by other methods.
- Needle inserted into central spinal fluid where medicine is injected and needle is removed.

#### Advantages:

- Usually gives good pain relief.
- Takes effect immediately.
- Some mothers may be able to walk.
- Does not alter pushing efforts.

#### Possible Side Effects and Disadvantages:

- Itching.
- Possible spinal headache (rare).
- Limited time duration.
- Possible infection.



*Type:*

**Epidural Narcotic Only  
(Walking Epidural)**

*When/How Given:*

- Established for labor pain not relieved by other methods.
- Needle inserted into epidural space and small catheter placed for later use (needle pulled out after catheter is inserted.)

*Advantages:*

- Usually gives good pain relief for early labor.
- Some mothers may be able to walk.
- Able to use catheter for local anesthetic later if needed.

*Possible Side Effects  
and Disadvantages:*

- Itching.
- Often restricts mobility.
- Can become Spinal anesthesia if epidural catheter goes into the spinal fluid when inserted.
- Intravascular injection.
- Blood pressure can drop within the first 30 minutes after epidural is started, so frequent monitoring of blood pressure during that time.
- Possible risk of infection.
- May necessitate vacuum or forceps delivery due to decreased pushing ability.
- May experience spinal headache postoperatively (rare).

**Local Anesthetic Epidural**

- As labor progresses, typically during active/transition labor.
- Usually given as a continuous infusion via a control pump.

- Medication easily administered as labor advances.
- Can shorten labor by allowing the mother to relax.
- Mother can usually push with assistance; may feel pressure.
- Medication can be turned down or off during the second stage, if necessary, to assist with pushing sensation.
- Provides enough pain relief without sedation for Cesarean delivery; allows mother to remain awake during surgery.

- Often restricts mobility requiring bedrest during labor.
- Can become spinal anesthesia if epidural catheter goes into the spinal fluid when inserted.
- Intravascular injection.
- Blood pressure may drop during the first 30 minutes after epidural is started, so frequent monitoring of blood pressure during that time.
- Possible risk of infection.
- May necessitate vacuum or forceps delivery due to decreased pushing efforts.

**Spinal Block**

- May be given for Cesarean birth.
- Medication is injected into the spinal canal.

- Effective immediately.

- May experience spinal headache postoperatively (rare).
- Itching.