

Patient Information

Pain Relief in Labour: How do the Options Compare?



Methods with medication	Entonox (gas and air)	Diamorphine injection	Epidural or combined spinal epidural (CSE)
What is it?	A gas mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen	Diamorphine is injected into the muscle in your arm or leg	Local anaesthetic and a painkiller given through a fine tube in your back to numb your nerves. May not be recommended in very early or late labour.
What do you do?	Breathe in through a mask or mouthpiece with a valve	Have an injection in your arm or leg	Sit still in a curled up position for five to ten minutes while the tube is put in
How much pain relief?	Moderate help	Often mild. May reduce anxiety	Usually very good. One in ten times it may not work well and may need replacing
How long until it starts to work?	Immediate	Five minutes to prepare the injection, then 30 minutes before it starts to work. The effect lasts for a few hours	Up to 20 minutes to set up. Then 20 minutes for the epidural to work (a CSE will be quicker than this as you will also have a spinal injection but this may not be advised.)
Any extra procedures?	None	None	You will be on a drip. You may have a urinary catheter. You will be connected to a monitor to check your blood pressure and baby's heartbeat.
Risks to baby?	None	May be slow to breathe. May be drowsy and find it difficult to feed at first.	You may have a low blood pressure which can affect baby's heart rate if not treated
Side effects for mother?	Some nausea. Can feel 'spaced out'. Can be tiring and make your mouth dry.	Feeling sleepy or sick. Delay the rate at which food is digested so you get a full stomach. May slow your breathing.	Low blood pressure is common. Difficulty passing urine necessitating a urinary catheter. Bad headache (1 in 100 women). Increase in temperature. Temporary nerve damage (1 in 5000), permanent nerve damage (1 in 13000). Severe complications 1 in 250,000 women.
Effect on labour or delivery?	None	None	Can make it harder to push. May increase the need for forceps or ventouse delivery.
Where is it available?	On all wards and home births, may not be appropriate in very early labour	On all wards, may not be appropriate in very early labour	Only available on labour ward

Physical Methods	Water Pool	TENS	Alternative Therapies
What is it?	A birthing pool or bath filled with hot water	A gentle electrical current is passed through pads on your back	Acupuncture, acupressure or hypnotherapy
What do you do?	Lie in water during your labour and sometimes while your baby is born	You press a button to control the strength of the current	You will need to arrange a therapist privately to be with you during the birth.
How much pain relief?	May help you relax and make contractions seem less painful	Mild. Tingling feeling helps reduce the pain. Ideal to reduce backache in early labour.	May help you relax and make the contractions seem less painful.
How long until it starts to work?	Immediate	5 minutes to put on the pads and set up	Works as soon as therapy starts
Any extra procedures?	None	None	None
Risks to baby?	Breathing problems and infections carried in water (rare)	None	None
Side effects for mother?	None	None	None
Effects on labour and delivery?	None	None	None
Where is it available?	Birth centre and at home births	If brought in with you, can be used anywhere during your labour	Anywhere if you arrange for a therapist to be with you during your birth

Large print and other languages

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Macluumaadkaan waxaa loo heli karaa qaab kale, sida ugu akhrinta ugu fudud, ama far waa weyn, waxana laga yabaa in lagu heli luuqaado Kale, haddii la codsado. Wixii macluumaad dheeraad ah, kala hadal kooxda xarunta caafimaadka.

Bu bilgi, kolay okunurluk veya büyük baskılar gibi alternatif biçimlerde sunulabilir, ve talep üzerine Alternatif Dillerde sunulabilir. Daha fazla bilgi için klinik ekibinizle irtibata geçin.

آسان ۛی ۛ پڑھنے کے سۛی ج، ۛی ۛ سکت جا ۛک اب ۛ دست ۛی ۛ ٹس ۛ فارم متبادل معلومات ۛی ۛ پرنٹ بڑا ۛی اور درخواست ۛر متبادل زبانوں میں بھی دستیاب ہو سکتی ہیں۔ مزید معلومات کے لیے، اپنی کلینکل ٹیم سے بات کریں۔

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