



Possible Effects of Medications and Anesthesia During Labor

Research shows low-intervention births are linked to:

- Faster, easier deliveries
- Mothers and babies who are more alert and active
- Mothers and babies who show more interest in breastfeeding

Some studies have linked medications and anesthesia given during labor to the following:

- Mothers who have longer labors
- Babies who have a slower transition to breathing
- Babies who have an uncoordinated sucking reflex
- Babies who are sleepier, have less interest in feeding
- Mothers who have delayed milk production with less volume
- Shorter duration of breastfeeding

Many things can ease labor pain without medications or epidurals. Before labor starts, talk with your health care provider about your desires for your baby's birth.

Consider writing a birthing plan.

- **Preparation:** It can be very helpful to learn about the natural birth process. Take a birthing class if possible. Practice breathing and positioning techniques with your support person(s) so you feel comfortable using the techniques during labor.
- **Relax:** Focus on breathing and relaxing when you are in labor. Listen to soothing music. Use a special focal point and the techniques discussed in your birthing class. Dim the lights in your room. Limit the number of visitors you have.
- **Positive attitude:** Think of labor as work you do in order to see your baby, not something that happens to you. The way you think about labor can affect how you experience pain. Every contraction brings you closer to meeting your baby and holding her in your arms.
- **Be active:** Stay out of bed as much as possible. Being upright and moving allows gravity to help position the baby correctly in your pelvis. Walking helps stimulate contractions and opens your pelvis so the baby has more room. Bending over or sitting on a birthing ball helps relieve back pressure.
- **Monitoring:** Ask if intermittent fetal heart rate monitoring is appropriate for you. It will allow you to be up and moving more than continuous monitoring, and your baby's heart rate will be checked at regular intervals.
- **Water therapy:** Water can reduce your pain, increase relaxation and help tissues stretch. If you have back pain, try taking a shower with the shower head pointing over your back as you sit on a birthing ball or shower chair. If a Jacuzzi tub is available, you may find the warmth and movement of the water eases labor pain.