



Today women have choices about pain relief during childbirth. Every birth experience is different for each woman. The physicians and nurses who care for you during labor and delivery want to help make the experience of childbirth as joyful as possible for you. They will work with you to manage any

discomfort you may have, in the ways that work best for you.

At the time of delivery, an anesthesiologist will join your obstetrician to handle your treatment for pain relief.

Here are some basic facts about pain relief in childbirth. Ask your doctor for more information about your delivery.

Breathing and Relaxation Techniques – Childbirth classes can be helpful for you to learn what to expect during labor and delivery. In the classes you will be taught breathing and relaxation techniques. These simple techniques are easy to learn and can help you to relax during labor. The labor and delivery nurse will assist you with breathing and relaxing.

I.V.s and Medications – Most commonly, an anesthesiologist may prescribe an I.V. (intravenous) medication to control pain. The I.V. is placed in a vein, usually in the hand or arm. A nurse will give you these medicines through the I.V. which may make you and your baby sleepy for a short period of time.

Local Anesthesia – Your doctor may inject medicine into the vaginal area when your baby is ready to be born. This medicine reduces feeling in a small area, but you may still feel contractions. Local anesthesia often is given before an episiotomy, which is a small incision to help deliver your baby.

Regional Blocks – A regional block reduces or blocks the pain of labor and delivery by numbing sensation from the waist down. You can stay awake and alert. There are three types of regional blocks:

Epidural – If you want to have an epidural, your anesthesiologist and obstetrician will look at your medical history, your baby's status, and the progress of your labor. If they think it is safe to proceed with an epidural, the nurse will assist you in positioning for the epidural placement. The skin on your lower back will be cleaned, and a small amount of numbing medicine will be injected into your skin. The anesthesiologist will place a tiny catheter (tube) through a needle into the lower back to help relieve pain that you may have, remove the needle, and then tape the catheter into place. Medicine will be given through the epidural as long as you need it. You may feel a tingling sensation in one leg (or both) or in your buttocks while the doctor performs the procedure. This is not unusual and may last for a short period of time. You may

experience shivering, low blood pressure, and itching which are common side effects of the epidural medicine. If you experience any problems, tell your nurse and she will report it to your doctor. The anesthesiologist will explain any other side effects you may have.

Spinal – This type of pain block is mostly used for cesarean sections. It is performed in the same manner as an epidural, except it is administered as a single injection into the spinal fluid and there is no epidural catheter (tube).

There is some risk involved when getting a spinal, an epidural, or any medication. Your doctor will answer your questions and explain the procedure to you.

Combined Spinal/Epidural – This is another form of regional block that involves placing an epidural catheter plus a spinal injection. Your anesthesiologist will insert a tiny catheter tube through the epidural needle and place pain relief medicine in the spinal fluid.

As you look forward to your baby's birth, there are many ways you can prepare for the big day and the weeks to follow. Ask your doctor and nurse for more information about how you can make your baby's birthday a happy, healthy one for your child, yourself, and your family.

Helpful Websites:

Prenatal and Childbirth Classes at UAMS, including
Comfort Measures for Labor and Delivery
<http://www.uams.edu/patienteducation>

Having a Baby at UAMS
<http://baby.uams.edu>

Other Educational Resources
<http://www.asahq.org/patientEducation.htm>
http://www.soap.org/soap/patient_education.asp
<http://www.lamaze.org>
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>



ANTENATAL & NEONATAL GUIDELINES, EDUCATION
AND LEARNING SYSTEM

4301 West Markham, #518 • Little Rock, AR 72205
Phone 501/526-7425 • Toll Free 1-866-273-3835

www.uams.edu/angels



ANGELS

What Are My Pain Relief Options?

