

## Options for Pain Management

Every woman has a unique birth experience. During labor, different women will experience pain in different ways. There are many different methods to manage the pain of labor contractions. Controlled breathing and relaxation techniques can help you cope with the pain of childbirth. Lamaze is the most commonly recognized prepared childbirth method that focuses on breathing and relaxation. Some women choose to also use pain medication to ease the discomfort of labor.

**Intravenous (IV) Medication-** Stadol is a medication which is often used during labor. It is an analgesic which helps to lessen contraction pains. Stadol does not cause numbness or loss of muscle control, but it will change your perception of the intensity of pain during labor. Stadol is injected into your IV. Like any medication, Stadol can have side effects. You may feel drowsy, dizzy, or confused. Stadol may have similar effects in the baby and is usually not given during the transition phase of labor because the baby may be affected by side effects of the medication after delivery.

**Regional Analgesia** numbs specific parts of the body during labor and delivery. There are several different types of regional analgesia. Epidural anesthesia is the most common type.

**Local anesthesia** provides pain control and numbness in a small localized area. Local anesthesia is used at the time of delivery and is injected into the perineum. The most commonly used medication is Lidocaine.

**Epidural anesthesia** provides pain control and numbness from the abdomen down to your legs and feet. A needle will be placed into your back to reach the epidural space in your spine. A thin tubing called a catheter will be threaded into this space and will be taped to your back. The needle is removed and the tubing is connected to a pump which will continuously provide medication for pain relief throughout your labor. There are many possible side effects with an epidural. The most common side effects include decreased blood pressure, headache, and slowed labor.

**Spinal anesthesia** is given by inserting a needle into the spinal space of your spine. A single dose of anesthetic medicine is given and the needle is withdrawn. This type of anesthesia is most often administered prior to a scheduled cesarean section delivery.

**Combination Spinal/Epidural anesthesia** may be used for a planned cesarean section delivery. This method combines both epidural and spinal techniques to provide pain relief during and after surgery.

**General Anesthesia** provides complete pain relief during delivery because of loss of consciousness caused by the medications used. General anesthesia is used in an emergency situation where either the mother or fetus is at risk for problems if labor continues. The baby is delivered immediately by cesarean section delivery once general anesthesia takes effect.