

Prenatal Education: Topic #4: Possible Effects of Medications and Anesthesia

Breastfeeding is the gift of a lifetime, a gift that only a mother can give.

Medications and anesthesia in labor have been shown to have detrimental effects on labor progress, the infant, and breastfeeding. These detrimental effects include:



- ▶ Prolonged labor.
- ▶ Your baby may have trouble breathing.
- ▶ Depressed infant reflexes including sucking.
- ▶ Disorganized infant suck.
- ▶ Decreased infant alertness, affecting infant's ability and readiness to feed.
- ▶ Delayed milk onset.
- ▶ Decreased milk volumes.
- ▶ Shortened duration of breastfeeding.
- ▶ Increased infant weight loss.



Research shows that non-interventive birthing practices accomplish:

- Faster, easier births.
- Healthier, more active and alert mothers and newborns.
- Mother and baby are more ready to breastfeed.

There are many ways to help you through labor without pain medications and epidurals. In fact, these methods help you have a faster, more efficient labor, and give the baby the best start in life. Staying active, using breathing and relaxation, and having helpers will optimize labor progress, infant health, and breastfeeding success.

- Attitude is important: see labor not as something that happens to you, rather it is the work you do to deliver your baby!
- What you think about during labor can really help you through it: each contraction brings you closer to your baby; labor is a normal, healthy process; your body is well-designed for this wonderful process; you are bringing a new person into the world!
- Out of bed: Stay out of bed as much as possible. Being upright, such as walking and showering, utilizes gravity to help bring your baby down.
- Telemetry monitoring: this type of monitoring allows you more mobility.
- The nurse may be able to listen briefly to check your baby's heartbeat so you can be free to move around for longer periods of time.
- Walking keeps you upright plus stimulates your contractions. It also keeps you off your tailbone, which opens more space for your baby to come out.
- Use a birthing ball to sit on or lean over. This helps relieve back pressure, helps you stay upright, gives your helpers to your back for massage, and helps your pelvis open for the baby.
- Use the rocking chair and change your position often.
- Use the shower. Use of water in labor reduces pain. If you have back discomfort, point the shower spray over your back. If you want to sit while in the shower, you may use the ball or shower chair.
- Use the birthing tub. The motion and warmth of the water lessens pain. Warm water also helps you tissues stretch so there's less tearing. It makes a comfortable transition for the baby.
- Have a doula help you. A doula is a person trained and experienced in helping women through labor. You can ask your nurse to call one for you. The doula gives you support and guidance. Having a doula has been shown to shorten labor, decrease complications, and increase breastfeeding success.
- Take a childbirth class with your partner so you can have education and practice with breathing, relaxation, and other techniques to help in labor. It is good to have a coach to help you with these techniques and encourage you. Practice these techniques before you go into labor.
- Playing music and having a calm, dim environment may help with relaxation.
- Talk with your provider if you desire other ways to help you through labor.

