

Q14 If I have to subsequently undergo a C-section, will the epidural catheter be removed?

No. The same catheter will be used to administer anaesthesia. However the concentration of the drug will be higher to minimise discomfort during surgery.

Q15 Is the epidural safe for mothers with hypertension/ heart disease/ lung disease?

Epidural is the technique of choice and is highly recommended for mothers with this problem. However individual circumstances may be different.

Q16 Does it always work?

Sometimes the tip of the epidural catheter lies in such a space that the drug does not act. However this can be taken care of by removing and adjusting the catheter.

Q17 Are there any contradictions?

Yes, there are a few. Epidurals are contraindicated in mothers who have clotting problems or infections at the site of injection. Also if a mother has epilepsy, the seizure threshold is lowered with the drugs used.

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**Pain Relieving
During Labour**

Pain Relieving During Labour

Introduction

For most women, the pain of childbirth is the most acute pain they have experienced or will ever experience. While some women have a level of pain they can tolerate, there are others who may need some form of pain relief.

The most popular and safe relief option is the epidural.

1 What is an epidural?

An epidural is an injection given into the lower back. It is the most effective way to relieve labour pain. The feeling of pain is carried to the brain via the nerves in the spinal cord.

2 Will an epidural injection hurt?

The area where the epidural injection is to be inserted will be numbed prior to performing the procedure with a local anaesthetic injection. You will feel a small prick of this injection but subsequently the procedure will be pain free.

3 Is it safe to take an epidural?

Epidurals have an excellent worldwide safety record. As with any procedure, however, some patients may experience minor side effects like blood pressure, headache and generalised itching.

4 Will I be completely pain free?

While many women are totally pain free after an epidural, some women may have some pain. The intensity of pain in these women however is significantly reduced to keep them relatively comfortable through their labour.

5 Does the epidural/spinal hurt?

The anesthesiologist makes every effort to insure each patient's comfort during the placement of an epidural or spinal. This involves alerting the patient to each step of the process, generous use of local anesthetic ("Novocain"), and reassurance and support from the labor room nurse. Of course each patient's perception and pain threshold is different, but in general epidural/spinal placement is not painful.

6 Will the epidural harm my baby?

No, not at all.

7 How quick is the effect of the epidural?

The drugs given through the epidural take 15 to 20 minutes to act. The effect lasts for up to one and a half hour after which the drugs are continuously topped up through the epidural catheter to keep you pain free throughout your labour. Does

8 Will I be totally numb?

Patients are aware of contraction. We do not completely block sensations as the patient needs some power to push and participate in labour. You will be able to move your lower body as

9 Will I feel my contractions?

Most patients often experience numbness after the initial dose of medication. This gradually gives way to less numbness, but the pain relief effect continues. Patients are often aware of their contractions, but they should not be painful. As labor progresses, especially close to delivery, the mother often experiences intense pressure. This pressure is difficult to alleviate and attempts to do so can lead to ineffective pushing, which can delay delivery.

10 Will it be painful after the delivery?

After the delivery the pain intensity is much less and is well taken care of by routine analgesics like paracetamol or diclofenac tablets.

11 How common is headache after epidural? How do you treat it?

Headache after epidural is uncommon. Most headaches respond to conservative management using simple analgesics like paracetamol.

12 Does an epidural cause a backache?

No. Minor back problems are common during pregnancy and childbirth, with or without an epidural.

13 Do epidurals result in C-sections?

No. The chances of a normal delivery before or after the procedure are the same. There is sufficient data to prove that an epidural will not lead to an increased rate of c section.