

EPIDURAL ANESTHESIA

Epidural analgesia blocks pain from the abdomen (uterus), birth canal, and extending down the legs. Most epidurals are placed after regular labor contractions are established. Therefore, if you would like an epidural, you will be in labor a short time prior to the epidural being placed. All epidurals are administered and supervised by an anesthesiologist who monitors your pain control and is personally present as needed.

After the skin is numbed, an epidural needle is placed between the vertebrae of the back and into the epidural space. Through the needle, a small plastic catheter (tube) is threaded and the needle is removed. Medication is injected through the catheter. It will take 10 minutes for the pain from your contractions to diminish, and leave you with only the sensation of pressure during labor. The anesthetic will then be placed on an IV pump and continuously infuse throughout your labor and delivery.

A small percentage of patients will not achieve complete pain relief from the epidural block. It is also possible for the catheter to pull out during the course of normal movements associated with labor, necessitating replacement of the catheter to maintain or reestablish patient comfort.

Once the epidural has been placed, your blood pressure will be monitored, until after you deliver. You will also remain in bed with continuous monitoring of your contractions and the baby's heart beat until delivery. Due to loss of feeling, some women may not be able to feel the sensation to urinate. Therefore, a catheter may be placed in your bladder to empty the urine for you.

Once the epidural is in place and your contraction pain is gone, this is the time for you and your partner to get some rest. The more rested both of you are, the more you will be able to remember and enjoy your birth experience.

You will receive a **separate bill** from one the anesthesiologists for inducing and supervision of the epidural anesthesia. The cost depends on the length of time the epidural is in place. Please contact your insurance company to verify coverage. If you have any unanswered questions, you may call (812) 378-9027.

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