



# Something for the Pain

## *Options During Childbirth*

As with any drugs, there are risks involved for you and your baby in using pain killers during labor. You'll need to weigh the risks, talk with your doctor and be informed about which drugs your healthcare provider recommends.

### **NARCOTICS**

- Narcotics such as Demerol, Stadol or morphine can reduce and dull labor pain.
- They may cause nausea and drowsiness in the mother.
- If a narcotic is given within a short time before delivery, the baby may need medication to help it be more alert at birth.

### **ENTONOX**

- This drug is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide (laughing gas).
- It's breathed in between contractions.
- It's a useful tool most often for women who are almost fully dilated and ready to push, but need some temporary pain relief.
- It can be used for temporary pain relief if there's a delay in receiving an epidural.



### **EPIDURAL ANESTHESIA**

- An epidural is probably the most commonly used method of pain relief during labor.
- It's used in the later active phase of labor for women who are having difficulty dilating or as the numbing agent in a Caesarean section.
- It's a procedure that places a small plastic catheter into the epidural space in your lower back, allowing medication to block the pain sensations of labor.
- You can still feel your legs and lower body and you'll be aware of your contractions, but may feel weak and slightly numb.
- There's an increased possibility that your doctor will need to use forceps or vacuum aspiration to help your baby out of the birth canal.

### **PATIENT-CONTROLLED ANALGESIA**

- This method allows laboring women to self-manage their pain control.
- An intravenous line is attached to a computer pump with a button you push when you feel the need for medication during contractions.
- The computer prevents you from taking unsafe amounts of medication.
- It can make your baby somewhat sleepy, which will require a different medication to reverse the sleepiness.
- It's most often recommended for women who can't have an epidural.