



Pain relief in labour

There are many options for pain relief during labour that expecting mothers can choose from, if they want any.

The hospital at which you are booked for delivery will offer childbirth education classes to prepare you for labour and delivery, including pain management options. It is a good idea to book in for these as early in your pregnancy as possible.

For Epworth Freemasons childbirth education classes, call (03) 9418 8314.

For St Vincent's Private childbirth education classes, call (03) 9411 7441.

It is important to discuss the options for pain relief during your antenatal visits to the obstetrician so a plan can be made and you are made aware of the advantages and risks of each method, as well as checking to see if there are any underlying medical conditions that may prevent you from using one or more of the options. The most common forms of pain relief during labour and delivery are listed below.

Epidural

An epidural is an injection of painkilling medication into the lower part of the back via a needle and small tube. The medication that is injected blocks signals from the nerves in your spinal cord that normally conduct pain messages from the uterus and cervix to the brain, just like a local anaesthetic. This is an option that provides very effective pain relief during labour and delivery.

Gas

Gas commonly used as a form of pain relief during labour is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide. Whilst it does not remove the pain altogether, gas can provide good pain relief and the supply is controlled by the mother.

Hypnobirthing

Hypnobirthing is a method of increasing a positive birthing experience. Hypnotherapy is used to reduce the fear that some people experience during the labour and childbirth process and increase endorphins, the body's natural pain-relief hormone.

Hypnobirthing is a method that can be used for vaginal delivery and Caesarean section. Classes are available online or in-person and more information can be found at <https://hypnobirthingaustralia.com.au/>

TENS - natural pain management

TENS stands for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation. It is a system that can be used during labour to provide pain relief during contractions and to assist with back pain during labour. It works by sending electrical pulses from a small portable unit that you hold or attach to your clothing to electrode pads that stick to your skin on your back.



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TENS helps by:

- Providing a distraction during the contraction.
- Stimulating the release of endorphins, which are the body's natural pain relieving and 'feel good' hormones.
- The electrical pulses intercept and block the pain message from reaching the brain.

Advantages:

- TENS is simple and easy to use
- It can be used at any stage of labour, including during early labour at home
- You can continue to move around and mobilize as you please whilst using TENS
- It is safe, non-invasive and does not affect the baby
- It can easily be turned off or removed at any point
- You are in complete control of its use
- It can also be used in conjunction with other medical forms of pain relief in hospital

Disadvantages:

- You will need to purchase or hire the TENS machine prior to labour as most hospitals do not provide TENS machines.
- You will need someone to apply the pads to your back for you
- You cannot use the TENS machine in water so it must be removed should you wish to use the bath or shower during labour.
- It may make massage of your lower back a little difficult as the pads cover a large portion of this area.

If you are interested in using TENS you can find detailed information as well as hire options at: www.tensaaustralia.com.au

You can also email info@tensaaustralia.com for more information.