

Epidural Agreement

This agreement is provided to ensure that you have made an informed decision concerning the risks and side effects of an epidural for you and your baby during labor and postpartum. Please put a check mark next to those issues which you would like to be reminded of if you ask for an epidural during your labor. ONLY check the things that would bother you the MOST:

These are the things that WILL happen:

- Will require an I.V. bag of fluids to be given prior to receiving the epidural.
- Will require the blood pressure cuff to tighten on your arm every 15 minutes or less.
- Will require a urinary catheter because you may not be able to urinate with the epidural. The catheter may increase my risk of a bladder or urinary tract infection, requiring antibiotics, which may cause you to have a yeast infection and cause your baby to have thrush.
- Will severely restrict your mobility during labor.
- Will deprive you of the natural production of endorphins which, in turn, may reduce endorphin response associated with pleasure and joy.
- Will deprive you of the sense of mastery over labor and feeling of accomplishment.
- Will deprive your baby of your natural production of endorphins which help your baby cope with the pain of the contractions.

These are the things that MAY happen:

- May severely limit the positions in which you can push (squatting increases pelvis size) or hands and knees to help with shoulder dystocia (Gaskin Maneuver).
- May increase the possibility of a vacuum or forceps delivery if you are unable to effectively push the baby out.
- May increase the possibility of an episiotomy because the I.V. may cause your perineum to become engorged and therefore not able to stretch to allow the baby to be delivered easily.
- May increase the possibility of a cesarean surgery instead of a vaginal birth.
- May increase the incidence of chronic backache.
- May cause you to feel as if you're not able to breathe, if placed too high.
- May lower your blood pressure, possibly requiring additional medical intervention.
- May slow down or stall your contractions, especially if given before 5 cm dilation, thereby requiring additional medical intervention (Pitocin).
- May add an hour or more to the pushing stage.
- May provide uneven or incomplete pain relief.

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(Continued)

These are more things that MAY happen:

- May cause or increase nausea, vomiting and shivering.
- May cause extreme itching, requiring additional medical intervention which, in turn, may cause nausea and dizziness.
- May increase your risk of infection (at site of application and from the subsequent and frequent vaginal exams).
- May cause an allergic reaction.
- May cause spinal headaches or spinal fluid leaks, requiring additional medical interventions after the birth.
- May cause disturbances of the fetal heart rate requiring additional medical intervention for you and/or for your baby.
- May cause your baby to be drowsy at birth and have a poor sucking reflex, requiring additional medical intervention.
- May cause maternal fever (called "epidural fever") which may require additional medical intervention for your baby, including neonatal NICU workup, such as a spinal tap.
- May cause decreased muscle strength and tone in the first hours of your baby's life.
- May cause decreased maternal/infant bonding.
- May cause increased breastfeeding difficulties.

IF I ASK FOR AN EPIDURAL, I WANT MY DOULA OR SUPPORT PERSON TO (PICK ONE):

- Encourage me to keep going, no matter what I say unless I use the following word or phrase: _____

- Ask me to try _____ more contractions and then, if I still want it, I will ask again.
- Ask me to wait for _____ more minutes and then, if I still want it, I will ask again.
- Remind me to try to wait until my cervix is _____ cm dilated.
- Help me get an epidural when my cervix is _____ cm dilated.
- Remind me to wait until _____ hours of active labor have passed.
- Help me get an epidural when _____ hours of active labor have passed.
- Help me get an epidural as soon as I ask for it.
- Other _____