

Pain Medications for Labor and Birth

Medications	Time Given & Duration	Desired Effects	Side Effects
Labor			
Analgesics Demerol Nubain Stadol	Active labor Lasts 1-2 hours	Reduces perception of labor contraction. Enhances relaxation close to time of delivery.	Possible drowsiness. Lethargy in baby if given too close to time of delivery.
Muscle Relaxants Vistaril Phenergan Compazine	Early or active labor. Used in combination with analgesics.	Relieves tension. Enhances relaxation. Reduces nausea.	Possible drowsiness. Lethargy in baby if given too close to time of delivery.
Sedatives Seconal	May be given in late evening or at night with false or very early labor.	Allows mother to rest or sleep.	May depress baby if given too close to time of delivery.
Vaginal Delivery			
Local Block	Prior to episiotomy	Numbs perineum	May sting slightly when administered. Little or no effect on the baby.
Pudendal Block	After complete dilation prior to episiotomy.	Numbs vaginal opening. Reduces sensation of perineal stretching.	Varying levels of effectiveness may result on the baby.
Paracervical	May be given late in labor or just prior to birth.	Numbs cervix and birth canal. Reduces sensation of descent of infant.	May sting when administered. Causes fetal bradycardia mild to severe.
Labor Epidural	Administered in labor from early to active labor.	Numbs sensations of contractions.	Decreased effectiveness of labor. Prolonged labor. May impair pushing efforts.
Cesarean Delivery			
Epidural Block	Administered in labor or delivery room. May be used for vaginal or cesarean delivery 1-2 hours.	Numbs body from below the breasts down to the toes. Mother awake and aware. Requires larger doses of medication.	May feel pulling or pressure sensations at birth, but no pain sensation. May lower blood pressure temporarily. Nausea.
Spinal Block	Administered in delivery room 1-3 hours duration.	Numbs body from below the breasts down to the toes. Mother awake and aware. Requires less medication.	Baby will be delivered within 5 to 10 minutes with little or no effect on baby.
General Anesthesia	Administered by gas and IV medications after mother is scrubbed and draped for Cesarean delivery.	Asleep, pain-free state	Baby will be delivered within 4-5 minutes to minimize effects of anesthesia on baby or infant may be depressed.
Morphine Epidural	Given after delivery into existing epidural block. Duration of morphine effects is approx. 24 hours. May become effective immediately or within 2 hours after administered.	Provides anesthetic effects during first 24 hours after delivery. Mom quite comfortable and able to ambulate easily.	May experience slight burning at incision site. Total body itching is usually the most frequent complaint. Benadryl IV given and repeated as necessary. Could depress respirations and cardiac stability. Some precautions may be to use EKG and apneic monitors from time of administration to 12 hours after delivery. Check your institution for policy of monitoring.