

# Information Sheet

## WORKING WITH PAIN



If you have any English language difficulties, please ask staff to book an interpreter. From home contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 13 1450. Services are provided free of charge. Ask staff if this information is available in your preferred language.

### EASTERN HEALTH MATERNITY SERVICE

#### Information for pregnant women

Eastern Health Maternity believes that pregnancy and childbirth are normal life events and unnecessary intervention should be avoided. Decisions in maternity care should be based upon the most current evidence, in conjunction with the choices of the women in our care.

When labour is progressing 'normally' - that is when contractions are normal and the baby is in a good position- with support and encouragement, women often cope with the pain they experience in labour. This is due to the production of the body's natural pain-killers, called endorphins.

In some circumstances, the pain can be described as 'abnormal pain', for example when the baby is poorly positioned, or the labour has been accelerated with drugs. In these cases, women are more likely to request pain relief in the form of drugs. Please ask your midwife/doctor for more information relevant to your own needs, circumstances and wishes.

#### Pain relieving strategies

Many women want to avoid pain relieving drugs in labour. Studies have proved that both continuous support by a trusted caregiver, and/or emotional support from a partner, friend, or family member in labour can help normal labour progress, and aid women's feeling of 'being in control'.

Immersion in water during the first stage of labour can significantly reduce the perception of pain, as can relaxation and 'self hypnosis' techniques. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) can be very useful with coping with the early stages of labour, and are available to hire (this needs to be organised during pregnancy). You are able to use dimmed lighting, music, massage, breathing and relaxation techniques in all birth rooms to help you to relax and feel safe.

#### Pain relieving drugs in labour

##### 1. Inhalational analgesia (gas and air)

- Can provide a mild pain relieving effect to cope at the height of a contraction
- Can assist with breathing techniques
- Can be used in conjunction with water immersion and TENS
- Can make you feel light-headed or nauseated

##### 2. Opiate analgesia (Pethidine/Morphine)

- Can provide a mild pain relieving effect
- May cause you to feel light-headed, nauseated or drowsy
- Can be given in conjunction with a drug to prevent vomiting
- May cause baby to be drowsy and interfere with breastfeeding for a few days

- May cause baby to be slow to breathe at birth- a condition that will be monitored and reversed with drugs if necessary

### 3. Epidural

- Can provide more effective relief than opiate analgesia
- Is associated with longer labours and increased chance of giving birth assisted by forceps or vacuum
- Is not associated with an increased risk of caesarean section
- Will necessitate the use of intravenous (IV) fluids, a urinary catheter and continuous monitoring of the baby using a CTG machine
- May occasionally cause baby to be drowsy and interfere with breastfeeding for a few days
- May occasionally cause baby to be slow to breathe at birth- a condition that will be monitored and reversed with medication if necessary

Updated August 2014. This document has been developed having regard to general circumstances, in light of information available to the authors at the time of preparation. Please discuss your options with your midwife or doctor in relation to your own personal circumstances. If this is a hard copy it may not be the latest version of this document.

#### **Protecting Your Privacy**

Eastern Health is committed to protecting your privacy. We will keep your personal information secure and will disclose information about you only when required by law. We comply with relevant information and privacy legislation. If you would like more information, please ask a staff member or visit our Web site [www.easternhealth.org.au](http://www.easternhealth.org.au)

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