

Epidural Risks

1. Will require an I.V. to be inserted and a bag of fluids to be given prior to receiving the epidural.
2. May require a urinary catheter because I may not be able to urinate with the epidural (I also understand that the catheter may increase my risk of a bladder or urinary tract infection, requiring antibiotics, which may cause me to have a yeast infection and cause my baby to have thrush.) but if no catheter than I will have to use a bedpan with support from others.
3. Will severely restrict my mobility during labor.
4. Will severely limit the positions in which I can push (no squatting to increase pelvis size).
5. May increase the possibility of a vacuum or forceps delivery if I am unable to effectively push the baby out.
6. May increase the possibility of an episiotomy because the I.V. may cause my perineum to become engorged and therefore not able to stretch to allow the baby to be delivered easily.
7. Will increase the possibility of a cesarean surgery instead of a vaginal birth.
8. May increase the incidence of chronic backache.
9. If done too high may cause me to feel as if I'm not able to breathe.
10. May lower my blood pressure, possibly requiring additional medical intervention.
11. May slow down or stall my contractions, especially if given before 5 cm dilation, thereby requiring additional medical intervention (Pitocin).
12. May cause extreme itch, requiring additional medical intervention, which, in turn, may cause nausea and dizziness.
13. May cause or increase nausea, vomiting and shivering.
14. May increase my risk of infection (at site of application and from the subsequent and frequent vaginal exams).
15. May provide uneven or incomplete pain relief.
16. May cause an allergic reaction.
17. May cause spinal headaches or spinal fluid leaks, requiring additional medical interventions after the birth.
18. Will deprive me of the natural production of endorphins, which, in turn, may reduce endorphin response associated with pleasure and joy.
19. Will deprive me of the sense of mastery over labor and feeling of accomplishment.
20. Will deprive my baby of my natural production of endorphins which help my baby cope with the pain of the contractions.
21. May cause disturbances of the fetal heart rate requiring additional medical intervention for me and/or for my baby.
22. May cause a hematoma on the spinal cord, paralyzing me from the waist down permanently (extremely rare, but can happen 1/3000 to 1/2 million).

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23. May cause my baby to be drowsy at birth and have a poor sucking reflex, requiring additional medical intervention.
24. May cause maternal fever, which can lead to hyperthermia and require additional medical intervention, including neonatal NICU workup, such as a spinal tap.
25. May cause decreased muscle strength and tone in the first hours of my baby's life.
26. May cause decreased maternal/infant bonding.
27. May cause increased breastfeeding difficulties.

Resources: <http://www.gentlebirth.org/archives/epirisks.html> , BEST doula services website - California, http://www.kimjames.net/epidural_risks_and_side_effects.htm ,