

## Epidural information card

### Epidurals in labour- what you need to know

#### Advantages of epidural analgesia

- Usually provides excellent pain relief.
- Sometimes a **spinal** is given first for immediate effect.
- The dose or type of local anaesthetic may vary, so the ability to control movement of the legs can be variable as well.
- In general, epidurals do not affect your baby.
- Can be topped up for caesarean section if required and usually does not require an extra procedure.



#### Setting up your epidural

- May take some time. Sometimes an anaesthetist (or trainee) is not available immediately to provide an epidural (usually it can last about 30 minutes from request).
- You will need to have an intravenous cannula and maybe a drip.
- While the epidural is being placed, it is important that you sit still and let the anaesthetist know if you are having a contraction.
- Usually it takes 10-30 minutes to set up an epidural and 5-15 minutes to work.
- Some epidurals do not work properly and need to be adjusted or replaced.

#### Possible problems with your epidural

- Repeated top-ups with stronger local anaesthetic may cause temporary leg weakness and may increase the risk of forceps or ventouse delivery.
- The epidural may slow down the second stage of labour slightly.
- Fever (38°C or higher) occurs in approximately 20% after an epidural. Usually it is difficult to distinguish between an infection or the epidural anesthesia itself as a cause. Epidural anesthesia does affect body temperature (without this being a major problem). Often antibiotic therapy is started, sometimes during labour, and your baby will occasionally be monitored for signs of infection, with or without antibiotic treatment.
- You may develop low blood pressure or itching during the epidural.
- The epidural site may be tender but usually only for a few days. Backache is NOT caused by epidurals but is common after any pregnancy.

**The other side of this card shows a table with important risks of epidurals peripartum.**

#### Contact information

If you have any questions after reading this information, feel free to contact the outpatient clinic:  
043-387 45 00

General Hospital number: 0031-43-387 6543

Mailing address

PO Box 5800 6202 AZ Maastricht

Visitors Address hospital

P. Debyelaan 25 6229 HX Maastricht

#### Website

- [www.mumc.nl](http://www.mumc.nl)
- [www.gynaecologie.mumc.nl](http://www.gynaecologie.mumc.nl)
- [www.anesthesiologie.mumc.nl](http://www.anesthesiologie.mumc.nl)

<i>Type of risk</i>	<i>How often does it happen?*</i>
<p>Fever (38°C or higher)</p> <p><i>Often requires antibiotic therapy for the mother but only occasionally requires observation and antibiotic treatment of your baby</i></p>	1:5
<p>Significant drop in blood pressure</p> <p><i>This will be treated immediately with medication</i></p>	Occasional
<p>Not working well enough to reduce labour pain or pain during a caesarean section so you need to use other ways of pain relief</p>	Occasional
<p>Severe headache</p> <p><i>Occurs often after labour, but rarely caused by an epidural</i></p>	0.04-6% of the epidurals is complicated by an injection that is too deep. This might cause spinal fluid leakage which may lead to headache
<p>Nerve injury (numb patch on a leg or foot, or having a weak leg)</p>	Occurs often temporarily, although very rarely caused by the epidural
<p>Temporary nerve damage</p>	1:5000
<p>Permanent nerve damage (paralysis)</p>	1: 240.000
<p>Epidural abscess or hematoma (hemorrhage)</p>	1: 170.000
<p>Meningitis</p>	1:100.000
<p>Unconsciousness</p>	Extremely rare

\*The risks shown above are estimates from the literature and may vary in different hospitals, regions and countries.

Odin 037392 / uitgave april 2016

Bezoekadres  
P. Debyelaan 25  
6229 HX Maastricht

Postadres  
Postbus 5800  
6202 AZ Maastricht

Algemeen telefoonnummer  
043-387 65 43  
www.mumc.nl