

Obesity in pregnancy: pain relief and anaesthesia

This leaflet is for pregnant women who have a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 35-50.

- If you have a BMI of over 40 you will be asked to attend a consultant clinic to be booked under consultant care and advised to give birth on the delivery suite.
- If your BMI is above 50, you will also be asked to attend an anaesthetic clinic.

The leaflet explains what pain relief and types of anaesthetic can be offered to you on delivery suite when you come to have your baby.

- It is normal to gain weight during pregnancy but too much weight, or obesity prior to pregnancy leads to higher risk of diseases like high blood pressure, breathing problems, diabetes, blood clots and infections in your chest or any wounds.

What does having a high BMI mean for my pregnancy?

- There is an increased risk for the mother and baby in women who have high BMI's. The Obstetrician and Midwife will monitor you for problems and risks during your pregnancy.
- Most women will have a normal delivery without any problems.
- Women who are very overweight (obese) can have a higher chance of forceps delivery or caesarean section. (If your BMI is over 35 your risk of needing a caesarean is doubled).

What are the options for pain relief?

- Simple pain relief like paracetamol or co-codamol.
- Stronger pain relief like pethidine or Meptid.
- Entonox (gas and air), breathed in through a mouth piece or face mask.
- Diamorphine injections.
- Epidural or epidural plus a spinal anaesthetic (CSE - Combined Spinal and Epidural).

Are there likely to be problems with an epidural or CSE for me?

Epidurals are generally very safe but some problems may occur:

- It may be harder to find the correct place to put an epidural in.
- It may take longer to put in the epidural.
- There is a greater chance of it needing more frequent checks to get the epidural working evenly on both sides of the body or having to re-site it to improve its effectiveness.
- We often advise that you have an epidural early in labour because obese patients have an increased risk of delivery complications, which may require an anaesthetic.

What if I need to go to theatre?

If your epidural is working well we can top up the epidural to provide you with good pain relief during the caesarean section or forceps delivery.

- If you do not have an epidural then we will try and give you a single injection in the back (Spinal) this will provide you with good pain relief during your caesarean or forceps delivery. As with the epidural, these can be more difficult and take longer to put in if you are obese.
- In an urgent or emergency situation it may take longer to give you your anaesthetic for safety reasons. **Your** safety is most important.
- We try to avoid giving a general anaesthetic.

Why are you trying to avoid giving me a general anaesthetic?

- Awake anaesthesia (epidural or spinal) has been shown to be safer for you and your baby.
- Although general anaesthetics are very safe, some rare complications can occur. Pregnant patients have a greater tendency to have heartburn, which is due to the acid in the stomach. This is more common in women with a high BMI. Medication can be given in the labour suite to reduce the production of this acid in your stomach, however with a general anaesthetic there is a risk of this acid being inhaled and this can lead to severe complications.

- If you have a general anaesthetic we need to put in a breathing tube. If you are obese there is more chance that this will be difficult or sometimes impossible.
- If there is no other option we will put you to sleep with all the safety measures in place.
- It is very important that you work together with the doctors for your general safety.
- Although general anaesthetics are very safe there are some rare problems that can occur.

Do I have an increased risk of problems after my baby is born?

- If you have a normal delivery with no pregnancy complications your care after the baby is born will be the same as everyone else. You may need a daily injection of Heparin, such as Fragmin to prevent blood clots. You will need to have the injection for a few weeks when you are at home.
- If your baby was delivered in theatre, you will need a daily injection of Heparin to prevent blood clots. You will need to have the injection for a few weeks when you are at home.
- If you have a general anaesthetic, (put to sleep) you may be given oxygen to breathe for a few hours after your operation (Caesarean).
- Whilst you are in hospital, the anaesthetist and obstetricians will see you daily to check on your recovery.

Further Information

If you would like further information, or would like to speak to an anaesthetist, please discuss this with your midwife who will book you into an anaesthetic clinic.

For further information on pain relief in labour and anaesthesia for Caesarean section please ask the midwife in the antenatal clinic or download a leaflet from the Mid Yorkshire NHS Maternity website.

www.midyorks.nhs.uk/Our+services/Maternity+services

Alternatively reliable information can be found at the “Obstetric Anaesthetists Association” (OAA) website at: www.oaa-anaes.ac.uk and click on “information for mothers”

Contact numbers

Dewsbury and District Hospital

Community Midwives: 01924 816047

Antenatal Day Unit: 01924 816104

Antenatal Clinic: 01924 816075

Pinderfields Hospital

Community Midwives: 01924 543424

Labour Suite: 01924 541661

Ward 18/ Triage: 01924 541693

Antenatal clinic: 01924 541113

Antenatal Day Unit: 01924 541110

Pontefract Hospital

Community Midwives: 01977 747433

Midwife Led unit: 01977 747432

Antenatal Day Unit: 01977 747410

Antenatal Clinic: 01977 747400

We are committed to providing high quality care. If you have a suggestion, comment, complaint or appreciation about the care you have received, or if you need this leaflet in another format please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on: **01924 542972** or email: **pals@midyorks.nhs.uk**

1353e

Updated Sept 2017

Review Date 2020



Dewsbury and District Hospital
Halifax Road, Dewsbury WF13 4HS

Pinderfields Hospital
Aberford Road, Wakefield WF1 4DG

Pontefract Hospital
Friarwood Lane, Pontefract WF8 1PL

 0844 811 8110 / 01924 541000

 @MidYorkshireNHS

 TheMidYorkshireHospitalsNHSTrust

 www.midyorks.nhs.uk