

Nitrous Oxide for Pain Control During Labor

St. Luke's is the only hospital in the area currently offering this option for pain relief

What is nitrous oxide?

Nitrous oxide (also known as laughing gas) is a self-administered gas composed of 50% nitrous gas and 50% oxygen that women are able to use during labor to help cope with pain, as well as feelings of anxiety or apprehension.

When is nitrous oxide used?

Nitrous oxide can be used throughout labor to reduce stress or pain associated with contractions. Nitrous oxide may not be used at the same time as an epidural or narcotic therapy.

How is nitrous oxide used?

The mother places the mask on her face and inhales nitrous oxide for about 30 seconds before a contraction begins. This allows the gas to reach peak effect at the same time a contraction starts. The mother continues to place the mask on her face to inhale nitrous oxide, as needed. Mothers must be able to hold the mask to their own face to use nitrous oxide; no one else is allowed to hold the mask for them.

Are there side effects of nitrous oxide for the mother?

There are potential side effects of nitrous oxide for the mother including nausea and unsteadiness when standing. Medications are available to help ease nausea if it occurs and mothers may need help with unsteadiness.

Are there side effects of nitrous oxide for the baby?

There are no known side effects of nitrous oxide for the baby. The mother feels the effects of nitrous oxide, but it is cleared through the lungs in one to two breaths, so the baby does not feel the effects of nitrous oxide.



If you are interested in using nitrous oxide during labor, ask your health care provider.

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