

Anesthesia Medicine for Cesarean Birth

Medicine	Purpose	Method	Effects
Epidural	Blocks pain and allows you to be awake for the birth; you may feel pressure and tugging.	An anesthesiologist places a small catheter in your back, and medicine flows through it into the epidural space; takes effect within 5 to 10 minutes; lasts as long as needed; more anesthesia is used than is used for a vaginal birth so you will not feel pain during surgery.	Oxygen will be given through a mask; you may feel nauseated.
Spinal	Blocks pain and allows you to be awake for the birth; numbs you from below the breasts to the toes; you'll be unable to move your legs.	Similar to epidural above, except medicine is injected directly into the spinal fluid; usually a one-time dose rather than a continuous infusion; lasts 1 to 3 hours.	You will be given oxygen through a mask; you may feel nauseated; you have a small chance of headache later; you may need to lie flat for a time.
General	You are unconscious during surgery; used in an emergency to allow a quick birth.	An injection through an IV makes you unconscious; then a tube in your throat gives you inhaled medicine; given by an anesthesiologist.	Your baby is born quickly, minimizing side effects; your baby may be a little sleepy; after the birth, you may feel groggy and have a sore throat.