



## SAY NO TO DRUGS?

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I have had two uncomplicated pregnancies and delivered two healthy baby boys.

The first was born after 40 odd hours of labour and one epidural, and the second was born after nearly 100 hours of labour and NO epidural (no gas & air, no drugs, nothing)!

Two births, and two completely different experiences; the labour was different (obviously) but so was the recovery. I can tell you from experience, that there are pros and cons to both. But what I can't tell you, is which way I prefer.

The births of both my babies were intended to be lovely, natural home births. I loved the idea of being in the comfort of my own home, having my kitchen with all my favorite foods, the privacy of my own bathroom, the thought of sleeping in my own bed, etc. Unfortunately, however, both my babies were born in the hospital.

The first time, I 'gave in' to an epidural after about 32 hours of labour. I was exhausted, I was overwhelmed by the pain, and I was on the verge of collapse. The epidural was a Godsend. It took the terror out of the experience and allowed me to open my eyes and truly be aware of my surroundings. The delivery was lovely - I was aware of the progress, in tune with the pushing, felt his head as he popped out, and was able to pay attention to details: the look on my husband's face as he saw the baby's head, the brief moment of panic right before he was born, the smell of a brand new baby, etc. Sadly, these are details that I can't remember with the second baby.

My second labour/delivery was wildly frantic, painful as hell, exhausting, long, and overwhelmingly consuming. I remember it being dark, being sweaty, being awful. I don't remember pushing, I don't remember my baby boy coming out, I don't remember where my husband was; it was almost as if I had blocked out the world. What I *do* remember, however, is the sudden relief of pain the minute the baby was in my arms. To go from *that* much pain to *that* much joy in the span of a minute was awesome. I felt like superwoman: proud, strong, and happy. I also felt like a million bucks. I stood right up, walked to the bathroom and washed myself off. And I literally *walked* home from the hospital 6 hours later and spent the afternoon in the park enjoying a rare sunny day in London! I didn't tear, I didn't feel groggy, and despite the LONG labour, I wasn't tired at all.

Having a baby naturally is something I am so thankful to have experienced. But the true experience of labour is something I probably

couldn't recall if I had not had an epidural the first time. It's a trade-off.

I suppose it's quite nice to have had both experiences. And I'm also quite sure that there are loads of different experiences with epidurals, both positive and negative. Does anyone else have any advice/experience/stories about drugs during labour?

-Courtney

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