Anesthesia Information for Obstetric Patients

If you request anesthesia during labor and delivery or need anesthesia for a Cesarean birth or another surgical procedure, Concord Hospital Anesthesia Department will provide the safest and most effective form of anesthesia for you.

Definition of Anesthesia
The word “anesthesia” means “without feeling.” The medical field of anesthesia, called “Anesthesiology,” is the study of medicines that cause loss of consciousness, pain, and sensation. Medical doctors, called “Anesthesiologists,” and nurses, called “Anesthetists,” are specially trained in the field of anesthesia.

Anesthesia Types and Usage
There are many different types of anesthesia and which type used depends on your situation. Anesthesia types and usage examples include:

Spinal Anesthesia
Spinal anesthesia is a form of regional anesthesia that makes your body numb from your chest to your toes. With spinal anesthesia, a single injection of medication is administered into the fluid around your spinal cord. This medication prevents any feeling, pain or movement from the chest level down. The numbness lasts for a few hours. Spinal anesthesia allows you to remain awake and is preferred over general anesthesia for a Cesarean section. Spinal anesthesia can also be used for other procedures, including surgery in the abdomen or vaginal area. On rare occasion, spinal anesthesia may not numb the region enough for the surgical procedure. If this occurs, general anesthesia will be used.

Epidural Anesthesia
Epidural anesthesia is a form of regional anesthesia as well. Epidural anesthesia is administered through a small flexible catheter, or tube, placed in your lower back. This medication is not as strong as spinal anesthesia and is continually administered into your back for your entire labor. This medication usually helps to significantly reduce the pain of childbirth, but does not make you completely numb and allows you to push. The catheter is removed after birth. Epidural anesthesia can also be used for a Cesarean section or other surgical procedures. When the stronger numbing medicine is injected through the epidural catheter, numbness occurs from the chest down similar to spinal anesthesia.

General Anesthesia
This type of anesthesia is used for many surgical procedures and can also be administered for a Cesarean section. General anesthesia means you are “asleep.” You do not see, hear or feel anything during the procedure. The medications that produce general anesthesia are administered through a vein and breathing tube. The breathing tube is placed into your windpipe after you are asleep and removed before you awaken. You may have a mild sore throat afterward which usually goes away after a few days. General anesthesia may be used instead of spinal or epidural anesthesia for certain medical conditions.

Contact Us
All types of anesthesia will affect your whole body. It is important that the anesthesia team be fully aware of your medical history and all current medical issues. Providing accurate and complete information is important for us to provide you with the safest and most comfortable care. Our goal is to keep you and your baby safe! We will do our best to make your experience as pleasant as possible! If you have any questions, please call Concord Hospital Pre-Surgical Testing Center, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., at (603) 227-7000, extension 6078.