

## PAIN MEDICATIONS PREFERENCE SCALE

Rating	What it Means	How the Birth Partner Helps
+10	<p>1. Desire that she feel nothing; desire for anesthesia before labor begins.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an impossible extreme; if the mother says she is +10, she has no interest in helping herself in labor. Help her accept that it is neither wise nor possible to labor without any feeling. The risks make such a choice highly undesirable. She will have some pain and should focus on dealing with it.</li> <li>Review the discussion of pain medications with her.</li> </ul>
+9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of pain; lack of confidence that mother will be able to cope; dependence on staff to provide total pain relief.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow recommendations for +10</li> <li>Suggest she discuss her fears with her caregiver.</li> </ul>
+7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definite desire for anesthesia during labor as soon as the doctor will allow it, or before labor becomes painful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be sure doctor is aware of her desire for early anesthesia; learn whether having it is possible in your area.</li> <li>Inform staff of her desire when you arrive.</li> </ul>
+5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire for epidural anesthesia (which numbs from the waist down) before reaching transition phase (7-8 centimeters dilation).</li> <li>Willingness to cope until then, perhaps with narcotic medications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage her in breathing and relaxation.</li> <li>Know the comfort measures.</li> <li>Suggest medication to her as she approaches active labor.</li> </ul>
+3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to use pain medications, but not until the mother finds them necessary.</li> <li>Natural childbirth is not a goal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan to be active as birth partner to help her to keep medication use low. Use comfort measures.</li> <li>Help her to get medications when she wants them.</li> <li>Suggest reduced doses of narcotics or a "light" epidural block (to numb the abdomen only).</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No option or preference.</li> <li>This is a rare attitude among pregnant women, though it is not uncommon among birth partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become informed.</li> <li>Discuss medications.</li> <li>Commit your self to helping her decide on preferences.</li> <li>If she has no preferences let the staff manage her pain.</li> </ul>
-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference that pain medication be avoided, but only if labor is short or easy; desire for medication otherwise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not suggest that she take pain medications.</li> <li>Emphasize coping techniques, but do not try to talk her out of pain medications if she asks for them.</li> </ul>
-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong preference to avoid pain medications, mainly for the baby's benefit.</li> <li>Actively preparing (practicing relaxation, abdominal breathing and massage and reading outside childbirth class).</li> <li>Will accept pain medication for a difficult labor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare yourself for a very active role.</li> <li>If possible, invite or hire an experienced labor support person to accompany the two of you.</li> <li>Learn and practice relaxation techniques, abdominal breathing and massage together in advance.</li> <li>Know the comfort measures.</li> <li>During labor do not suggest medications.</li> <li>If she asks for medications, try other alternatives: have her checked for progress; ask her to try three to five more contractions without medication; remain firm, confident, and kind; use the Take-Charge-Routine; maintain eye contact and talk her through each contraction; get help from others.</li> </ul>
-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very strong desire for natural childbirth, for a sense of personal gratification as well as to benefit the baby.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the recommendations for -5, but with even greater commitment.</li> <li>Interpret requests for pain medication as expressions of discouragement and a need for more help.</li> <li>Remind the mother how much she wanted an unmediated birth.</li> <li>Only if these measures fail to calm her and spur her on should you stop trying to help her cope without pain medications.</li> </ul>
-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire that you and the staff deny the mother pain medication, even if she requests it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This puts the birth partner in a very in a very difficult position; you will probably feel very uncomfortable denying her medication if the mother is in serious pain. You may even be unable to do it.</li> <li>Promise to help all you can, but remind the mother that the final decision is not yours-it is hers.</li> </ul>
-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire that the mother forego all medications, even for cesarean delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an impossible extreme. Encourage her to learn about complications that require painful interventions. Help her develop a realistic understanding of risks and benefits of pain medications.</li> </ul>

**Discuss the following questions with your partner.**

1. Do you and your partner have similar positions on the pain medication preference scale?
2. How do you feel about mother's "pain threshold"?
3. How do you feel partner will react to seeing mother in pain?
4. Is partner supportive of desire for a natural childbirth?
5. Is it more important to mother or partner to have a natural childbirth?
6. How will mother feel if the birth does not go as planned and she ends up using medication? Will she feel like a failure? Will that be OK as long as both mom and baby are healthy?
7. How will mom and partner feel emotionally if mom ends up needing a Cesarean section?
8. Do you feel your partner will be able to provide all of the support you need in labor, physically, mentally and emotionally?
9. Have you ever considered having a doula, professional birth assistant, mother or friend attend the birth? How does your partner feel about this option?
10. How much emotional support do you expect from your doctor or midwife during labor?
11. Does your doctor or midwife spend time with laboring patients or do they come in at the moment of birth? How do you and your partner feel about this?
12. Is your medical practitioner supportive of unmediated birth?