

## Pain relief



### Relaxation and breathing exercises

Learn how to relax, stay calm and breathe deeply.

### Mobilisation

Keep moving - your position can make a difference, so try kneeling, walking around or rocking backwards and forwards.

### Water

The Rosie has eleven birthing pools available. Water can help you relax and make the contractions seem less painful. Ask if you can have a bath or use one of the pools. The National Childbirth Trust has more information on using water during labour and birth.

### Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)

TENS machines work by sending out electrical impulses which are believed to block pain receptors in your body, and also encourage your body to release natural pain relief chemicals (endorphins). You can use your own TENS machine if you have one, or use one belonging to the Rosie, subject to availability.

## **Entonox ('gas and air')**

Entonox is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide gas. It won't remove all the pain but it can help to reduce it and make it more bearable. Many women like it because it's easy to use and they control it themselves. You breathe in the gas and air through a mask or mouthpiece, which you hold yourself. There are no harmful side effects for you or your baby but it can make you feel light-headed. Some women also find that it makes them feel sick, sleepy or unable to concentrate. If this happens, you can stop using it. Your midwife will help guide you on its use.

## **Pethidine**

Pethidine is a painkiller given by injection. The effects last between two and four hours but it can make some women feel woozy, sick and forgetful, and if it hasn't worn off towards the end of labour it can make it difficult to push. If pethidine is given too close to the time of delivery it may affect your baby's breathing. Speak to your midwife who will be able to help you decide when is the best time to use this.

## **Epidural**

An epidural is a continuous infusion of painkilling drugs administered into your lower back. It numbs the nerves that carry the pain impulses from the birth canal to the brain. For most women, an epidural gives complete pain relief. It can be helpful for women who are having a long or particularly painful labour, or who are becoming tired. An anaesthetist is the only person who can give an epidural so they are only available on the delivery unit and when you are in established labour.