



# Mason Health Birth Center Offering Nitrous Oxide as Option for Pain Control During Labor

## What is nitrous oxide?

Nitrous oxide is an odorless, tasteless gas commonly used in dental offices and hospitals for pain management. At Mason Health Birth Center, we offer the Nitronox system – a blended mixture of 50% oxygen and 50% nitrous oxide as an option for our patients in labor.

## How does it work?

We provide a mask for you to hold over your mouth and nose. By holding your own mask, you can choose when and how much gas you receive. By inhaling the nitrous oxide 30-45 seconds before each contraction, you will receive the greatest pain relief when your contraction begins. It's important to exhale directly into the mask to protect others in the room from being exposed to the gas.

## How much will nitrous oxide help with labor pain?

Pain relief from nitrous oxide depends on the individual. Some women experience less anxiety and some reduction in pain while others report even greater pain relief. Occasionally, patients report the gas is not helpful or they do not like the way it makes them feel. In that case, other pain relief options are available.

## Does nitrous oxide affect the labor process?

Not at all. Nitrous oxide will not affect your uterus, decrease your contractions, or affect the progress of your labor.





## Are there any side effects? How will I feel?

You may feel drowsy or lightheaded while using nitrous oxide. Some patients may experience restlessness or confusion. After prolonged use, you may experience nausea. Medication will be available for nausea should this happen.

If you inhale too much gas at one time, you may faint or lose consciousness (pass out) temporarily. Because you are responsible for holding your own mask, your hand will naturally drop the mask should you experience these symptoms. Most side effects subside once you stop inhaling the gas.

## Does nitrous oxide affect my baby?

Nitrous oxide DOES cross the placenta to the baby, but no immediate effects are known. Various studies have not revealed that newborn behavior is affected; however, definitive long-term studies have not been conducted.

Women in labor clear the gas from their lungs in about five minutes. The gas that passes through the placenta to the baby is also cleared by the mother's lungs.

## Can I be walking or in the tub while using nitrous oxide?

No. You must stay in your bed or chair because of increased risks of using nitrous oxide while on your feet or in the labor tub. Staff members will be available to help you from the bed to the chair, or vice versa.

## If I use nitrous oxide can I still get an epidural?

Yes, women often choose to use nitrous oxide PRIOR to having the epidural placed. You cannot use nitrous oxide and epidurals together.

## Are there any reasons I cannot use nitrous oxide?

You cannot use nitrous oxide if you:

- Cannot hold your own mask
- Have received narcotics within the previous two (2) hours
- Have pernicious anemia (B-12 deficiency) requiring supplements
- Have one of a few medical conditions that your provider will assess during the review of your medical history

## My responsibilities as a patient:

I understand and accept that:

- I MUST be the only person holding the mask to my face to receive nitrous oxide. No one else can hold the mask to my face because of the risk of giving me gas when I am not in pain, or the potential of over sedation, airway obstruction, and decreased oxygen to myself and my baby.
- Nitrous oxide is for my use only and to help alleviate my pain.
- I must exhale directly into the mask to reduce the risk of exposure to staff and visitors.
- If I allow anyone else to use the mask or inhale the nitrous oxide, the person will be asked to leave and/or my option to use nitrous oxide will be terminated.
- Nitrous oxide is a controlled substance. Providing a controlled substance to anyone without a prescription may subject me to state, federal, civil, and/or criminal penalties.

## Any questions?

Ask your provider if you have any questions or concerns about nitrous oxide and its use.



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