

Bronson Birthplace

Nitrous-oxide Patient Education

What is nitrous-oxide? Nitrous-oxide is an inhaled pain medicine. It is a colorless, almost odorless, tasteless gas. It is inhaled through a mask to decrease the strength of pain. The patient gives herself nitrous-oxide so she is in control of her pain relief. The blend of oxygen and nitrous-oxide for laboring women is different than what is used in the dentist office.

Are there any side effects? Nitrous-oxide has been used safely by laboring women for decades. It is more commonly used in Canada and Europe. Some mothers report nausea with the use of nitrous-oxide. Dizziness, anxiety and restlessness are all possible risks. Nitrous-oxide does not slow down labor progress.

Are there any risks to my baby? There are no known effects to the baby. Nitrous-oxide is fast acting and cleared through the lungs. Within a couple of breaths, the effect of the medicine is gone and does not pass to the baby.

How do I use it and how will I feel? Just before the contraction begins, inhale a deep breath through the mask. Nitrous-oxide takes effect quickly. You may feel less anxious and relaxed helping you to cope with the strength of the contraction. You will still feel the contractions. Many laboring mothers say “It takes the edge off of the pain.”

Do I need an IV? No, patients are able to have nitrous-oxide with no IV.

Can I move around with the nitrous-oxide? Yes. Nitrous-oxide does not limit your movement. However, your nurse needs to be with you when you first begin taking the medicine to make sure you are safe and steady.

Is there any additional monitoring needed? No. No more than routine monitoring is needed.

I should not use nitrous-oxide, if I:

- Am unable to hold the mask yourself.
- Have a pernicious anemia or vitamin B-12 deficiency.
- Have had a narcotic within the last 2 hours.
- Have had methadone, suboxone or subutex within the last 5 days.

Can I have a narcotic medicine and nitrous-oxide together? No. It can slow breathing down when given together.

Can I change my mind about nitrous-oxide? Yes. I can choose another pain control option.