



Ascension St. Elizabeth Hospital

Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus provides a safe, personalized birth experience in a comforting, home-like environment. We strive to provide you with an experience tailored as much as possible to your wishes and birth plan.

Ascension NE Wisconsin - St. Elizabeth Campus

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Nitrous oxide in labor and delivery



Patient information on
self-administered pain control option

Ascension NE Wisconsin

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St. Elizabeth Hospital**

What is nitrous oxide?

Nitrous oxide is a colorless gas with a sweet odor and taste made for inhalation to provide analgesia.

- It is sometimes referred to as “laughing gas.”
- It has been used for years as a pain control option in labor.
- When used for labor, nitrous oxide is blended with equal parts of oxygen.

How it works

- Gas is inhaled through the mask at the beginning and throughout each contraction.
- Once the contraction is over, the mask is removed until the next contraction.

Nitrous oxide is a safe and effective pain management option for labor, allowing the mother to remain mobile, assisting the labor process.

- With assistance, you can continue walking or changing positions while using nitrous oxide. It is also encouraged to help promote the labor process.
- It is self-administered, giving you control over your experience.

How will I feel when using nitrous oxide?

Each patient has a different experience when using nitrous oxide. Most women say that the nitrous oxide helps “take the edge off” of the contractions, and allows them to cope with labor better. Some report more pain relief. Nitrous oxide helps in lowering anxiety. A decrease in anxiety can also help you better cope with pain.



Can I still get an epidural/IV medication if I decide I want it?

Nitrous oxide does not prevent you from getting an epidural or IV medication; however, you cannot use them simultaneously. Talk to your healthcare provider or nurse to see what works best for you.

Are there any side effects?

Some people may experience nausea, vomiting or dizziness while using nitrous oxide. These effects can be eliminated by simply removing the mask and taking a few deep breaths.

What about my baby?

Research has shown nitrous oxide is not harmful to babies either in the womb or at birth.

Nitrous oxide does cross the placenta, but is quickly removed from the infant's system once they begin to breathe.

Is it right for me?

Talk with your nurse and healthcare provider to determine what works best for your labor experience.