

An Exceptional Birthing Experience...

Pain Relief Options during Labor and Childbirth

As she rested in her spacious suite on SOCH's Maternity Pavilion, Judy Parker, 24, of Little Egg Harbor, couldn't take her eyes off of the beautiful baby girl cradled tenderly in her arms. Ashlee Elizabeth came into the world on January 9, 2007, an experience her mother described as "wonderful".

"My husband Michael and I are so overjoyed! We just love her so much," exclaimed Judy, who arrived at the hospital at 2 am when her contractions were six minutes apart. "At first the pain wasn't so bad, so I used breathing exercises to help me through the labor."

By 7:00 am, the contractions were three minutes apart, and Judy's discomfort increased, so she decided to take advantage of an epidural. "It made me numb from the waist down, and it also allowed me to relax, which made the entire experience much easier," she said.

According to **Todd Liu, MD**, Chairman of the Department of OB/GYN at SOCH, there are a number of pain control options to help women cope during labor and delivery.

"Every woman is different, and every delivery is different," said Dr. Liu. "Some women may feel minimal discomfort, while others may, indeed, experience some amount of

pain. Making the decision about how to cope with discomfort during labor and delivery is all about choice."

In SOCH's Maternity Pavilion, laboring mothers can take advantage of a relaxing whirlpool jacuzzi bath or the popular "Birthing Balls". Women can learn about these techniques, as well as all of the pain control options, at childbirth education classes hosted by SOCH.

According to Dr. Liu, analgesic pain relief medications can be administered either through a shot or intravenously. These medications could cause drowsiness or nausea. Tranquilizers don't relieve pain, but they can help to calm and relax a laboring mother who may be anxious. Before taking pain medication or tranquilizers, it is important to talk to your physician to learn how the drug may affect you and your baby, as well as when during the labor process the medicine can be administered.



Todd Liu, MD
Chairman of the Department
of OB/GYN at SOCH



Mordechai Bermann, MD
Co-Chair of the Department
of Anesthesiology at SOCH

◀ Judy Parker cradles her newborn baby girl, Ashlee Elizabeth, who was born at SOCH.

At SOCH, laboring mothers also have the option of having an epidural, which is administered by an anesthesiologist.

According to **Mordechai Bermann, MD**, Co-Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at SOCH, an epidural uses local anesthetics and/or narcotics on or around spinal nerves to help control the pain of labor and delivery. An epidural provides continuous pain relief to the entire body below the belly button, including the vaginal walls, during the entire process of labor.

"Depending on the type of medication that is used for the epidural, the laboring mother may develop numbness from the top of the abdomen down to the feet," explained Dr. Bermann. "Typically, the dose of medication that is delivered will have no effect on the baby. Individuals vary in the response to an epidural, and not everyone is an appropriate candidate for this pain control option."

Dr. Bermann comes to SOCH, thanks to a partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson University Medical Group. Should a woman require a cesarean delivery, he and his board-certified team of anesthesiologists work with SOCH's highly qualified obstetricians to perform the procedure in a specially equipped cesarean delivery room located on the Maternity Pavilion.

According to Dr. Liu, many women decide to take advantage of a combination of the pain control options described in this article. The expectant mother should speak to her doctor and learn as much as she can about each option. The choice, after all, is up to her.

For more information about **pain relief options during labor and delivery**, to schedule an appointment with an **OB/GYN** or for a free tour of the **Maternity Pavilion**, contact **SOCHConnect**, at **609-978-3400**.

