

# Using your “Cascade of Intervention” chart

By Andrea Roberson © Birth International



Birth International  
13A Buller Street  
North Parramatta NSW 2151 Australia  
Ph: 02 9890 7755 Fax: 02 9613 3999  
Email: [info@birthinternational.com](mailto:info@birthinternational.com)  
[www.birthinternational.com](http://www.birthinternational.com)

This chart may be used to illustrate or summarise your presentation on the effects of using drugs and interventions during birth on mother and baby. It is recommended that you supplement your information with a hand out so that the details can be recalled when necessary. The booklet *Preparing for Birth: Mothers* contains a similar diagram and additional notes and is ideal for this purpose.

The chart begins with induction as this is a common starting point for the interventions that follow. If labour has started spontaneously, the chart reflects the potential complications that may stem from an intervention at any point in the labour. Begin with the intervention under consideration and read downwards from there.

Induction is most commonly initiated using Prostaglandin gel. It may also be achieved using artificial rupture of the membranes (ARM) and an oxytocic drip. In either of these cases the potential outcomes are similar, although they may occur in a slightly different order.

Narcotic anaesthetic drugs include members of the opiate family: pethidine (Demerol), Fentanyl and heroin (diamorphine).

An epidural may involve a full or partial strength injection or anaesthetic agents, often mixed with narcotics. The potential for complications remains in all cases.

The effects on the unborn baby are difficult to quantify and identify, and the effects on the newborn of any drugs or interventions during birth have been poorly researched. The effects will vary according to the individual baby's sensitivity and tolerance, the dosage of drugs received, the gestational age of the baby (maturity) and the time interval between their administration and birth.

All the links shown on this chart reflect research and current evidence. For more information, the following texts and references will be useful:

Enkin, M. Kierse, M. et al, *A Guide to Effective care in Pregnancy and Childbirth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

Wagner, M. *Pursuing the Birth Machine - the search for appropriate birth technology*, ACE Graphics, Sydney, 1994.

Goer, H. *Obstetric Myths versus Research Realities - A guide to medical literature*, Bergin and Garvey, USA, 1995.

WHO, *Care in Normal Birth*, World Health Organisation, Geneva, 1996.

Lawrence, R. *Breastfeeding, a guide for the medical profession*, Mosby, USA, 1999.

Riordan, J. Auerbach, K. *Breastfeeding and Human Lactation*, Jones and Bartlett, USA, 1998.

May, A. *Epidurals for Childbirth*, Oxford Medical Publications, UK, 1994.

Howell, C. *Epidural versus non-epidural analgesia for pain relief in labour* (Cochrane review). In: *The Cochrane Library*, Issue 3, 1999.