

# COMMON BIRTH INTERVENTIONS AND YOUR OPTIONS FOR USING THEM

## hospital gowns

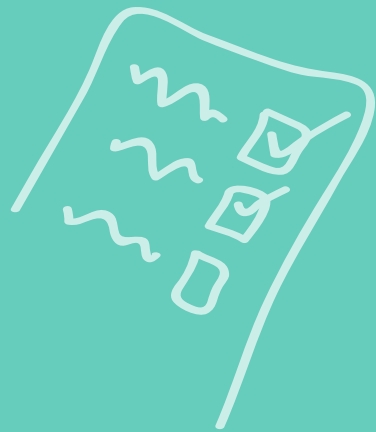
**PURPOSE:** Hospital gowns are designed to provide hospital staff easy access to any part of a patient's body that needs to be treated.

**PROS:** Easily replaced if or when the need arises.

**CONS:** They're once size-fits-all, which may not fit you; you may not like the way it covers or cannot cover you; you may feel uncomfortable in it.



*I'd like to be checked regularly.*



*I may say no but I'd like to be asked.*

*Only if I'm given a legitimate medical reason.*

**NO**

## vaginal exams

**PURPOSE:** Vaginal exams are conducted mainly to determine effacement (the softening and thinning of the cervix), dilation (the opening of the cervix, 0-10 cm), and station and position of the cervix, and of the baby. They most often happen at the time of hospital admission and then every four hours after.

**PROS:** Provide information about the "progress" of labor.

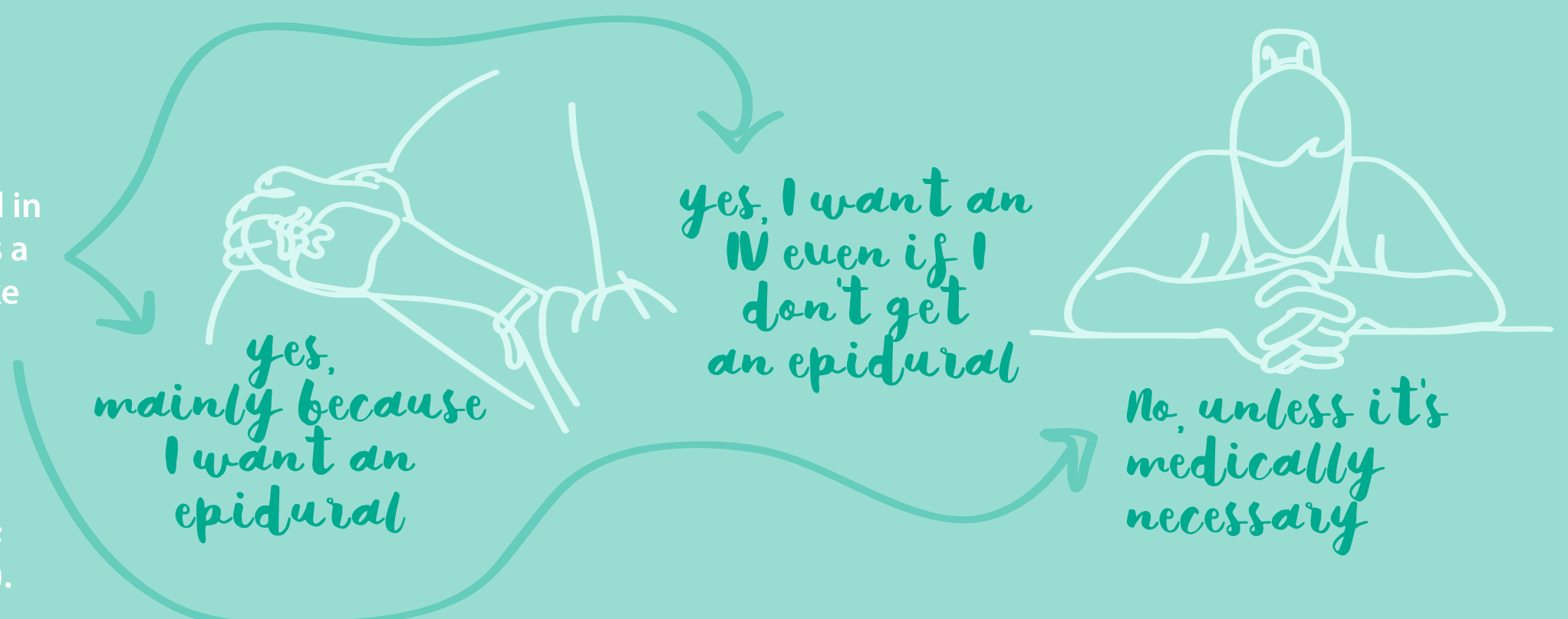
**CONS:** Don't predict how labor will progress; can disrupt labor; can increase the risk of infection; can cause discouragement if indicating "lack of progress"; and are invasive.

## IV/Saline-Lock

**PURPOSE:** An IV/Saline-Lock is a catheter usually placed in the hand or lower arm to drip fluids and medication. It's a hospital standard used to prevent dehydration and make the later administration of medicine quicker and easier.

**PROS:** Prevent dehydration. It's also necessary with an epidural or medical labor augmentation (ex. Pitocin).

**CONS:** Can be uncomfortable; severely limit movement; and lead to other unwanted interventions (ex. epidural).



# COMMON BIRTH INTERVENTIONS AND YOUR OPTIONS FOR USING THEM



*I'd really rather labor without medication*

*yes I'd like medical pain relief*

*I'll request it if I get tired or I'm not progressing*



## epidurals

**PURPOSE:** An epidural is an anesthetic that is injected into the epidural space of the spine. It has a numbing effect that relieves pain.

**PROS:** High pain relief satisfaction.

**CONS:** Significant interference with natural hormone balance in birth; can slow labor; can cause fetal distress; can impact the woman's body's ability to properly position baby for vaginal birth; increases need for Pitocin; increases risk of operative delivery (ex. use of forceps/vacuum); increases risk of c-section.

## electronic fetal monitoring

**PURPOSE:** The electronic fetal monitor is a machine that picks up baby's heartbeat continuously through straps attached around your abdomen. It was devised to detect problems quickly to give hospital staff time to intervene.

**PROS:** Monitors baby's heartbeat and prints a paper readout of that information.

**CONS:** Limits movement; imparts no clear benefit compared to alternative techniques; highly increases risk of c-section.



## IT IS EVERY WOMAN'S *right*

to receive all information on the risks and benefits of any and all interventions offered to her, and to decide whether she would like to utilize or decline them, especially when they are not medically necessary.

Information in this infographic comes from:  
Birth Plan Basics: What Should I Wear in the Hospital? ([www.perinatalempowerment.com](http://www.perinatalempowerment.com)); Vaginal Examinations – 7 Things You Should Know by Sam McCulloch ([www.bellybelly.com.au](http://www.bellybelly.com.au));  
Internal Examinations During Labour: How Many Are Necessary? ([www.motherandbaby.co.uk](http://www.motherandbaby.co.uk)); Routine IV During Labor ([www.whattoexpect.com](http://www.whattoexpect.com)); Pushed, by Jennifer Block