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## **Epidural Analgesia During Labor Is Not Associated with Back Pain.**

**Results from several retrospective cohort studies suggest that epidural analgesia during labor is associated with subsequent low back pain. These observations led British clinicians to conduct a follow-up study of 306 primigravid women with full-term cephalic presentations who were randomized to receive either epidural or non-epidural analgesia during labor. Outcome measures, applied on an intent-to-treat basis, included self-reported low back pain (on questionnaires) and limitation of movement (assessed during face-to-face interviews with a physiotherapist).**

**Of note, 67% of women in the epidural group and 28% in the non-epidural group actually received epidural analgesia. The mean time from delivery to follow-up was about 26 months.**

**The 2 groups did not differ significantly in time of onset, duration, or incidence of low back pain, or in limitation of movement. Almost one third of all women reported back pain during the week before the interview.**

**Comment: These investigators found no evidence of a causal relation between epidural analgesia during labor and subsequent back pain. Although this study is not without flaws (e.g., a large proportion of patients in each group crossed over to the other group), it provides the best evidence to date on this question.**

**-- Robert W. Rebar, MD**

**Howell CJ et al. Randomized study of long term outcome after epidural**

**versus non-epidural analgesia during labour. BMJ 2002 Aug 17;  
325L357-9.**

**At the time of publication, full text of the original article was available at  
<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/325/7360/357?ijkey=527d69e07e12d>**