A ‘preloading’ IV infusion of crystalloid solution (500-1000mls) may be given to reduce the risk of hypotension.

**Positioning:**
*Position the woman to sit into an upright position to promote curvature of the spine*
*Ask the woman to put her chin into her chest.*
*Make sure insertion of the epidural takes place post-contraction as the woman needs to stay extremely still for the procedure*

**Procedure:**
1. Using an aseptic technique, disinfect the area of the L1 (lumbar) to the L3.
2. The tuohy needle is inserted into the epidural space after encountering resistance from the ligamentum flavum
3. Catheter should be threaded through the needle to facilitate bolus top ups or continuous infusion
4. Tape should be used to secure the catheter in place making sure the insertion site is still viewable
How does an epidural slow down labour?

- Hypotension decreases oxytocin release
- Decreased adrenaline release slows down oxytocin release
- Malpositioning of the fetal head to transverse/posterior presentations
- With decreased oxytocin, uterine contractions are less effective and thus, slows down dilation.

Side effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPIOIDS</th>
<th>Suggested action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory depression:</td>
<td>• Stop epidural/intrathecal infusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respiration rate &lt;8</td>
<td>• Summon emergency help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resps/min</td>
<td>• Monitor respiration rate,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased sedation score</td>
<td>sedation rate and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Occurs approx 2 hours</td>
<td>Monitor respiration rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following infusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Non-pharmacological forms of pain relief

Hypnobirthing

Hypnobirthing involves self-hypnosis and relaxation techniques to help the woman feel prepared, relaxed and mentally ready for childbirth.

Affirmations:
Using positive statements to subconsciously help the woman realise her strength and confidence in herself and implant positive thoughts rather than negative thoughts.

“I trust my body to know what to do”
“Each surge of my body brings me closer to my baby”
“Birth is powerful. I will let it empower me”
“I am surrounded by love and support”

Controlled breathing:
Breathing deeply through the nose for 4 seconds
Breathing out through the nose for 7 seconds
or
Breathing deeply in through the nose for 7 seconds
Breathing out through the nose for 7 seconds
(this is said to trigger the parasympathetic nervous system to produce calming hormones)

Guided visualisation:
This technique involves creating a visualisation such as flowers or nature or a calming place. This is similar to daydreaming and the woman should be able to come out of these visualisations when she likes.