

Risks of Regional Anaesthesia (Epidurals & Spinals)

Explaining risk can be a challenge when it comes to epidurals and general anaesthetic during pregnancy. There are many ways of trying to explain the likelihood of an event occurring in a certain circumstance.

It is normal that you will have questions and concerns regarding the risk involved with the procedures that form part of your pregnancy journey.

The scale below can provide some clarity about the true risk and chances of something occurring. Though in most instances giving a definitive probability is impossible, by bracketing the likelihood of an event into the below terms, you can gain an understanding of how likely or unlikely something is to occur:



Very Common

Around 1 in 10 chance – the number of people in your close family



Common

Around 1 in 100 chance – the number of people that might live on your street



Uncommon

Around 1 in 1,000 chance – the population of your local community



Rare

Around 1 in 10,000 chance – the population of a small town



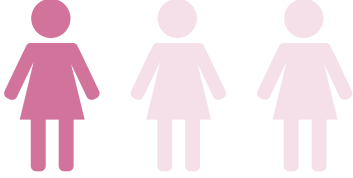
Very Rare

Around 1 in 100,000 chance – the population of a large town

Risks of Epidurals or Spinals for Birth

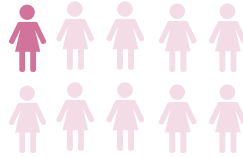
Very Common or Common

Itching:



1 in every 3 women

Epidural not proving effective enough in labour so further attention is needed to help function:



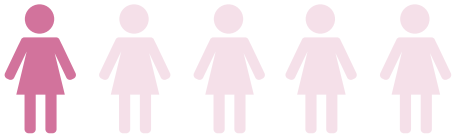
1 in every 10 women



1 in every 20 women

*Needing resite during labour as not working as effectively as needed.

Easily treatable drop in blood pressure during caesarean:



Spinal

1 in every 5 women



Epidural

1 in every 50 women

Regional anaesthetic not working well enough for caesarean section and general anaesthetic is needed:



Spinal

1 in every 50 women



Epidural

1 in every 20 women

Severe Headache

Epidural

1 in every 100 women*

Spinal

1 in every 100 - 200 women*

*subject to individual unit variation

Rare or Very Rare

Nerve damage (for example numb patch on a leg or foot):

1 in every 13,000 - 24,000 women

1 in every 1,000 women *temporary

Severe nerve injury:

1 in every 13,000 women

Paralysis:

1 in every 250,000 women

Abscess (infection) in the spine at the site of the spinal or epidural:

1 in every 50,000 women

Meningitis:

1 in every 100,000 women

Haematoma (blood clot) in the spine at the site of the spinal or epidural:

1 in every 170,000 women