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**Should I choose an epidural in labour? An antenatal decision aid for women**

A third of labouring women in Australia request an epidural, including women who had not planned to use one. Depending on the woman’s own values, beliefs and preferences, this decision may either negatively or positively affect self-esteem and satisfaction with birth experience. While epidurals are an effective analgesic, they are also associated with significant and cascading risk factors. Pregnant women report finding it difficult to access unbiased epidural information that enables them to work through their own values and what matters most to them. Decision aids have been shown to be useful when there is more than one reasonable option and the best decision for the woman is influenced by personal factors.

The aim of the new policy, therefore, is to offer pregnant women at Centenary Hospital for Women and Children (CHWC) unbiased information by implementing a self-administered decision aid on epidural use in labour. The decision aid will be developed based on the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) standards framework for shared decision-making support tools. The NICE standards framework outlines standards for the decision aid development process, plus the content and presentation of the decision aid. Evaluation during the development process will include acceptability testing by CHWC midwives and doctors, and women of childbearing age living in the jurisdiction. Evaluation post-implementation includes periodic review of the evidence.

The policy is important because women have the right to make informed choices that align with their values, beliefs and preferences; and a positive childbirth experience matters to women.

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