

# Anaesthetic advice about receiving heparin and LMWH injections during pregnancy

This leaflet is about being on heparin (or low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) such as Tinzaparin or Enoxaparin) injections in pregnancy and aims to explain the consequences for anaesthetic procedures in labour.

## Risks of LMWH injections during labour

Heparin injections help to thin the blood, preventing blood clots forming in the wrong places. You may be prescribed these drugs in pregnancy for a number of reasons to prevent or to treat blood clots during pregnancy. Unfortunately, heparin also reduces the blood's ability to clot in the right place and this can stop anaesthetists performing epidurals in labour as well as spinal anaesthetics for surgery, in case localised bleeding causes nerve damage.

The likelihood of this happening is related to the actual dose and the length of time after the last injection was given. The safety interval is different for the different forms and doses of heparin. Whilst you may not be planning on having an epidural as pain relief for your labour, it is usually better that you have not had an injection too close to the birth of your baby.

**If you think that your labour may have started, please do not have any more injections until you have discussed this with the hospital and a decision has been made about the birth of your baby.**

- If taking a low (preventative or prophylactic) dose you would not be able to have an epidural in labour or a spinal anaesthetic within 12 hours of your heparin injection.
- If taking a higher (treatment) dose you would not be able to have an epidural in labour or a spinal anaesthetic within 24 hours of your heparin injection.

There are other forms of pain relief in labour that can be used if this is the case. Please see our patient information leaflets on the hospital website, or ask for a printed copy:

<http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets/>

- Maternity – 'Pain relief in labour'
- Maternity – 'Remifentanil patient controlled analgesia'

The alternative to spinal anaesthetics for surgery is a general anaesthetic.

You may be referred directly to the anaesthetic clinic if you are taking heparin. The anaesthetic team will offer you a clinic appointment if further questions or discussions are needed. If we don't need to ask any more questions, we may not routinely offer an appointment in order to try to reduce the number of antenatal appointments you have to attend. We would be happy to meet with you if you have further questions for us. Please inform your midwife or the antenatal appointment team (0118 322 8964), who will be able to make an anaesthetic antenatal appointment for you.

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Dr L Williams (Consultant Anaesthetist), March 2003

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