

Pain Medications Preference Scale (PMPS)

By Penny Simpkin

Number	What it Means	Your Partner, Doula, Nurse or Caregiver Can Help You By
+10	I want to be numb, to get anesthesia before labor begins. (An impossible extreme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explaining that you will have some pain, even with anesthesia ◆ Discussing your wishes and fears with you ◆ Promising to help you get medication as soon as possible in labor
+9	I have great fear of labor pain; and believe I cannot cope. I have to depend on the staff to take away my pain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing the same for +10 above ◆ Teaching you some simple comfort techniques for early labor. ◆ Reassuring you that someone will always be there to help you.
+7	I want anesthesia as soon in labor as the doctor will allow it, or before labor becomes painful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing the same for +9 above. ◆ Making sure the staff knows that you want early anesthesia. ◆ Making sure you know the procedures and the potential risks.
+5	I want epidural anesthesia in active labor (4-5cm). I am willing to try to cope until then, perhaps with narcotic medications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Encouraging you in your breathing and relaxation. ◆ Knowing and using other comfort measures. ◆ Suggesting medications when you are in active labor.
+3	I want to use some medication, but as little as possible. I plan to use self-help comfort measures for part of labor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing the same for +5 above ◆ Committing themselves to helping you to reduce medication use. ◆ Helping you get medications when you decide you want them. ◆ Suggesting half doses of narcotics or "light and late" epidural.
0	I have no opinion or preference. I will wait and see. (A rare attitude among pregnant women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helping you to become informed about labor pain, comfort measures, and medications. ◆ Following your wishes during labor.
-3	I would like to avoid pain medications if I can, but if coping becomes difficult, I'd fee like a "martyr" if I did not get them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Emphasizing coping techniques. ◆ Not suggesting that you take pain medications. ◆ Not trying to talk you out of pain medications if you request them.
-5	I have a strong desire to avoid pain medications, mainly to avoid the side effects on me, my labor, or my baby. I will accept medications for difficult or long labor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Preparing for a very active support role. ◆ Practicing comfort measures with you in class and at home. ◆ Getting a doula (labor support person) to help for both you and your partner. ◆ Not suggesting medications. If you ask, suggesting different comfort measures and more intense emotional support first. ◆ Helping you accept pain medications if you become exhausted or cannot benefit from support techniques and comfort measures.
-7	I have a very strong desire for a natural birth, for personal gratification along with the benefits to my baby and my labor. I will be disappointed if I use medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing the same as for -5 above. ◆ Encouraging you to enlist the support of your caregiver. ◆ Requesting a supportive nurse who can help with natural birth. ◆ Planning and rehearsing ways to get through painful or discouraging periods in labor. ◆ Prearranging a plan (e.g. a "last resort" code work) for letting them know if you have had enough and truly want medication.
-9	I want medication to be denied by my support team and the staff, even if I beg for it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Exploring with you the reasons for your feelings. ◆ Helping you see that they cannot take that responsibility. ◆ Promising to help all they can, but the final decision must be yours.
-10	I want to avoid medication, even for a cesarean delivery. (An impossible extreme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Doing the same as for -9 above. ◆ Helping you gain a realistic understanding of risks and benefits of pain medications.

If you find that the meaning of the numbers above do not reflect quite the way you feel, you might pick a number that falls between them (for example, +4 or -6).