

CAN GOOD INTENTIONS BACKFIRE IN LABOR?



A Closer Look at Continuous Electronic Fetal Monitoring (EFM)

1960s:

Continuous electronic fetal monitoring (EFM) was introduced for high risk labors¹

1970s:

EFM became a routine part of maternity care²

2000s:

A 2012-13 survey of new parents revealed that 89% percent had electronic fetal monitoring in labor

EFM WAS DESIGNED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS, TO HELP DIAGNOSE FETAL STRESS DURING LABOR AND PROVIDE EARLY WARNING OF A BABY IN TROUBLE

SO DOES CONTINUOUS EFM WORK AS INTENDED? **NO. EVIDENCE SHOWS IT:**

- Does not improve well being of baby⁴
- Can restrict laboring person to bed
- Frequently gives false signals of a baby in trouble
- EFM records can be confusing, leading to an increased risk of a cesarean delivery

SITUATIONS WHERE CONTINUOUS EFM MAY BE RECOMMENDED:

- Labor is induced or sped up with Pitocin/Syntocinon
- Baby's heart rate changes or shows that more monitoring is needed
- You have an epidural
- You or your baby have a health problem that makes your birth high risk

In 2018, the World Health Organization said that for healthy women in spontaneous labor, Dopplers or Pinard stethoscopes should be used instead of EFM. This includes not using EFM for an "admission strip" when a woman arrives at the hospital.⁵

AVOID UNNECESSARY EFM:

- Find a care provider who doesn't recommend routine use of continuous EFM
- Talk to your care provider about intermittent monitoring with handheld devices instead of constant monitoring
- Ask whether your place of birth offers wireless monitors ("telemetry" units)

IF YOUR SITUATION REQUIRES CONTINUOUS EFM - HERE ARE A FEW TIPS:

- GO WIRELESS**
Ask to use the wireless telemetry device so you can walk around
- HIT MUTE**
Turn the beeping sound down or off, because it can be distracting
- CONTINUE TO MOVE**
Change positions in and out of bed as much as the EFM allows; ask your nurse or doula for positioning tips
- HIT PAUSE**
Get disconnected for regular bathroom breaks or a shower to help you manage the pain. Even walking a little can help move baby down and out

There's much more to know about safe monitoring during labor. **TAKE A LAMAZE CLASS** to learn about your options and how to push for a safe and healthy birth.

VISIT WWW.LAMAZE.ORG TO LEARN MORE.



1 Stout, M., & Cahill, A. (2011). Clin Perinatol (1st ed., Vol. 38, pp. 127-142). Philadelphia: Elsevier.
2 Stout, M., & Cahill, A. (2011). Clin Perinatol (1st ed., Vol. 38, pp. 127-142). Philadelphia: Elsevier.
3 Declercq ER, Sakala C, Corry MP, Applebaum S, Herrlich A. Listening to MothersSM III: Pregnancy and Birth. New York: Childbirth Connection, May 2013.
4 Alfirevic Z, Devane D, Gyte GML, Cuthbert A. Continuous cardiotocography (CTG) as a form of electronic fetal monitoring (EFM) for fetal assessment during labour. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2017, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD006066. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006066.pub3.
5 WHO recommendations: intrapartum care for a positive childbirth experience. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO