

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 2006 survey of new mothers revealed 76% had continuous EFM during labor³

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



Frequently gives false signals of a baby in trouble



Can restrict mom to bed



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



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

Avoid **unnecessary** EFM:



Find a care provider who doesn't require routine use of continuous EFM



Talk to your care provider about intermittent monitoring with handheld devices, instead of constant electronic 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 a wireless telemetry **device** so you can walk around



Hit Mute

Turn down or turn off the **beeping sound** if it is distracting to you



Continue to Move

Change positions **in and out of bed** as much as the EFM wires allow



Hit Pause

Get disconnected for regular bathroom breaks or a shower which can also help manage 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.

PUSH FOR THE SAFEST, HEALTHIEST BIRTH POSSIBLE. VISIT WWW.LAMAZE.ORG/PUSHFORYOURBABY 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, E.R., Sakala, C., Corry, M.P., Applebaum, S. (October 2006). Listening to mothers II. New York: Childbirth Connection. Retrieved from http://www.childbirthconnection.org/pdfs/LTMI_report.pdf

⁴ Alfirevic, Z., Devane, D., Gyte, G.M. (2013). Continuous cardiotocography (CTG) as a form of electronic fetal monitoring (EFM) for fetal assessment during labour. Cochrane Database Systematic Review.5:CD006066. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006066.pub2. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23728657>