Nitrous oxide is a gas that is used to relieve pain during procedures. It has been used for many years with dental procedures. It is most often known as “laughing gas.” In Europe nitrous oxide has been used during labor for quite some time. When used during labor it will not take all the pain away. It helps the mom relax and feel less tense during contractions.

Nitrous oxide is breathed in through a mask. You will give it to yourself by holding a mask tightly over your nose and mouth. This is done during a contraction. You control the amount of gas you need during labor by holding the mask on your face. Some moms have good results and some do not. Nitrous oxide starts to work quickly. The effects you feel will stop once you stop breathing the gas. You cannot take other medicines while using nitrous oxide. You can switch to another medication if it is not working for you.

Side effects
The side effects from nitrous oxide are often very mild. Some of the most common side effects are:
• Nausea
• Feeling dizzy
• Feeling light headed
• Feeling restless
• Vomiting
• Feeling anxious or nervous

Benefits of using nitrous oxide
• It does not slow down labor.
• You can switch medicines quickly if you do not like the nitrous oxide
• You do not need to have an IV.
• You do not need to be hooked up to the baby monitor all the time.
• There are no effects on the baby.
• You can still use the nitrous oxide if you need a procedure after the baby is born.
• You are able to:
  ▪ Be out of bed.
  ▪ Walk around.
  ▪ Sit in the tub.
  ▪ Shower.

Who can use nitrous oxide?
Nitrous oxide may not be the right choice for everyone. You and your doctor will decide if it is an option for you. It can be used with:
• Women in labor
• Women who need pain medicine for special cares or procedures after the baby is born
• Women who are nervous when getting an IV or an epidural
Using Nitrous Oxide During Labor

Who cannot use nitrous oxide?
Nitrous oxide cannot be used for the women who:
• Cannot hold the face mask.
• Used alcohol or drugs recently.
• Take vitamin B12.
• Need oxygen or who have a history of problems with their lungs.
• Are having babies that are not doing well during labor.
• Have had IV pain meds within 2 hours.
• Have low blood pressure.
• Have recently had:
  ▪ Eye pressure issues or surgery
  ▪ A brain injury
  ▪ A collapsed lung
  ▪ Middle ear surgery
  ▪ Blocked bowel
  ▪ Emphysema
• Do not tolerate nitrous oxide.

Contact information
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. weekdays
OB/GYN – La Crosse Clinic
(608) 775-8181 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 58181
Ask for a nurse who works with your doctor.
Avery R. Gundersen Center for Women – Onalaska Clinic
(608) 775-8176 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 58176

After 5 p.m., weekends and holidays
Telephone Nurse Advisor
(608) 775-4454 or (800) 858-1050