When to go to the hospital

* When you meet the criteria below, you can go directly to the hospital and be evaluated, they will then call your doctor. You do not need to call prior to leaving for the hospital.
* If you think, or if you are sure your water has broken,
  + Can be large gush or small continuous trickling
  + Will be more than moist or damp
* If you begin bleeding like a period,
* If you are having your first baby, you want to wait until you are having contractions every 3 to 5 minutes from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next,
  + Contractions will be painful and come and go
  + Once regular, they should not go away when you lie down and drink water
  + If some spotting occurs as you begin contracting this is ok.
* If this is your second or greater child, contractions should be regular and painful every 5 minutes,
  + All above instructions still apply.
* Please remember that if severe pain, bleeding or rapid progression of contractions occur you should go to the hospital **immediately**.

Choices for Pain

* Nothing.
* IV pain medications
  + This method takes the edge off but does not completely remove pain, and will usually alter mental status
  + Cannot receive after about 7cm dilated
  + Cannot receive if there is an abnormal fetal heart rate pattern on the monitor
* Epidural
  + Safe, effective, and usually removes all of the pain
  + Occasionally areas of pain persists
  + Pressure sensations usually continue
  + If abnormal fetal heart rate is present, and there is a need for pain control
* You can make your decision as you go. There is an anesthesiologist in the hospital or nearby. You can start with nothing and choose as you progress.
* Epidurals are administered in most cases if:
  + Progression of labor has ceased and is given to allow the pelvis to relax. In this case, many patients progress and delivery vaginally. There is nothing to lose at this point because an epidural will be given for a c-section.