



TO: Provincial Maternal Newborn Care Providers

FROM: Reproductive Care Program of Nova Scotia

DATE: June 5, 2020

RE: Use of nitrous oxide for labour analgesia

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In the initial stages of pandemic planning in Nova Scotia the use of nitrous oxide for labour analgesia was suspended, due to questions about whether use could be aerosol-generating. With more time for discussion and examination of this issue, and in consultation with Infectious Diseases, there is agreement that nitrous oxide can now be used safely.

At this time, and pending further review, resumption of use is recommended for women who are COVID-19 negative. The rationale for this decision is outlined below.

- Aerosolization of droplets requires increased velocity and positive pressure with gas administration. Nitrous oxide delivery systems rely on negative pressure generated by the patient breathing in. There is no evidence that use of nitrous oxide via these delivery systems is an AGMP.
- Advice about the use of nitrous oxide during a pandemic has been variable nationally and internationally, ranging from continued use to full suspension. Within Canada provinces such as BC are in the process of communicating the safety of nitrous oxide use and recommending that it be made available to all laboring women.
- Along with the safety of using nitrous oxide for labour analgesia, advice includes the use of appropriate filters and cleaning protocols.
- A number of countries and provinces in Canada have approved the use of nitrous oxide for all patients, including those who are known or suspected to be COVID-19 positive. It is likely that use of nitrous oxide can be extended to all laboring women in Nova Scotia in the near future.