

Sterile water injections for the relief of low back pain in labour

All women experience labour individually, enduring varying levels of pain and discomfort. Approximately 30% of women experience continuous low back pain.

A number of non-pharmacological techniques may be used to manage levels of low back pain such as active birth positions, water immersion, breathing, relaxation techniques, massage, TENS and acupuncture. Medications such as nitrous oxide gas, morphine injection and epidural anaesthesia may also be offered.

If you prefer to avoid medications and epidural anaesthesia, an alternate pain relief method consisting of two to four injections of 0.1 – 0.5 mL of sterile water under the skin can be administered by your midwife. This will create a papule.

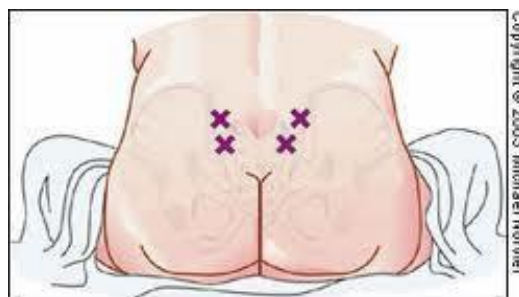
In many cases, this will provide rapid pain relief lasting up to three hours. It can be repeated as often as required and has no known adverse effects on you or your baby.

The sterile water is injected under the skin, on certain points on the sacroiliac joint (marked by X in the diagram below). The injections raise a papule that blocks the transmission of pain to the brain according to the “gate control theory”.

The injections cause a sharp stinging sensation for 20 to 30 seconds similar to a wasp sting. As the stinging fades, the back pain disappears, the pain relief potentially lasting for one to three hours.

After receiving the injections, avoid rubbing, touching or counter pressure on the injected area as this may disperse the papule and reduce effectiveness. The injections can be repeated as often as you need and can be used in conjunction with other pain relief excepts for epidural, hot packs, massage and TENS.

The four injection sites



You will be asked to score your pain on a scale from 0 to 10 prior to the injections (the treatment is more likely to be successful for pain of a certain intensity), and give verbal consent for the procedure (see Visual Analogue Score below)

Visual Analogue Score (VAS)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No pain I _____ I severe pain

