



Sterile Water Skin Injections for relieving back pain in labour

15 – 20% of women experience back pain in labour, often referred to as ‘back labour’, especially when baby is in a posterior position (his / her spine against yours). This back pain can even continue between your contractions and be severe enough to change your previous birth plans in regards to pain relief (use of gas, narcotics or an epidural).

There are many studies on Sterile Water Injections (SWI) that show they are effective at relieving back pain in labour for up to 85% of women, however each study didn't have large numbers of women so further large scale studies are currently being done in Queensland and the United Kingdom. SWI have been offered in large eastern states maternity hospitals for many years.

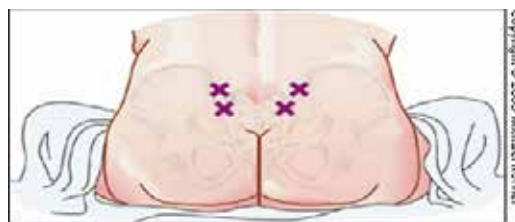
The pain relief from SWI is felt immediately within 1 – 3 minutes and lasts between 1-3 hours. The procedure involves a tiny amount of sterile water (less than ½ a millilitre) being injected just under your skin in four (4) places on your lower back (sacrum). This technique only works for severe back pain in labour and not your actual contractions.

The injections cause a brief but very intense stinging sensation, like a wasp sting, that only lasts for about 30 seconds and then wears off completely. As the stinging sensation eases, relief from the back pain is usually felt immediately. To distract you from the stinging sensation the injections are done during a contraction, sometimes by two midwives at the same time, to speed up the procedure.

The advantages of SWI, which is not a drug, include:

- no side effects for your baby
- no side effects for you (other than stinging at the time and needle pricks)
- they do not limit your mobility
- they do not impact on the natural progress of your labour
- can be repeated every 30 minutes if needed
- may reduce your chances of needing other pain relieving drugs with known side effects
- does not restrict your use of other pain relief (including bath / shower / drugs).

SWI may be the first choice of pain relief for women, with intense labour back pain, who prefer a drug free birth.



Reference: Queensland Health, Mater Mothers Hospital Patient Information, Accessed 11 March, 2016
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