This information answers some commonly asked questions about sterile water injections to treat low back pain in labour.

Please talk with your midwife or doctor about your situation and what matters to you. We encourage you to ask questions and take time to consider your options.

My notes and questions?
Please use this space to write down any questions or concerns:

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Shared Decision Making
It is always okay to ask questions

**BRAND is a handy memory prompt for questions you might like to ask us.**

**B** stands for BENEFITS - What are the benefits of each option in my situation?

**R** stands for RISKS - What are the risks of each option in my situation?

**A** stands for ALTERNATIVES - What alternatives might I have to what is being offered? (There are always alternatives!)

**N** stands for NOTHING - What if I do nothing? Doing nothing, or ‘wait and see’ is always an option. N can also stand for NOW? - Do I need to make this decision now? Taking time to consider your options, even if only for a few minutes, might be valuable to you.

**D** stands for DECISION - What is my decision?

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this brochure, please provide this feedback to your healthcare provider.

Endorsed by Northern NSW Healthcare Quality Research Committee

November 2020
What are sterile water injections?
About one in three women will experience continuous low back pain in labour. You may hear this called ‘back labour’. The pain can be very difficult to manage and may be severe enough to influence your plans and decisions about pain relief.

Sterile water injections can be an effective way to treat your back pain in labour. With your permission, we inject a small volume of sterile water (0.1-0.2mL) under the skin at four different places on your lower back (sacrum).

How do they work?
The injections cause a brief but intense stinging sensation at the site of the injection. The stinging lasts for about 30 seconds and then wears off completely. As the stinging eases, relief from the back pain is felt.

To distract from the stinging sensation the injections are done during a contraction by two midwives at the same time. It can help if you have some support and encouragement as the injections are given.

The crosses show the four places on the lower back where the injections will be given.

How long will the pain relief last?
Sterile water injections can provide effective pain relief for 8 in 10 women with low back pain in labour. The effect can last for up to 90 minutes and can be repeated as often as necessary.

Advantages of sterile water injections
- They often have immediate effect
- No side effects for mother
- No effect on baby
- They do not limit your ability to move around in labour
- Do not effect labour progress
- A simple procedure that can be administered by your midwife

Will sterile water injections help my labour pain?
Sterile water injections are an excellent choice for women who would prefer non-pharmacological pain management choices for labour and birth.

While the injections will not take away the pain of contractions, once the back pain has gone you may be better able to relax and cope with the normal pain of labour.

Sterile water injections can be used at the same time as other pain relief methods except heat packs and massage on the lower back or a TENS machine.

What other pain relief options and strategies are there?
Some other strategies to manage low back pain in labour may be:
- Staying upright and active
- Getting into a warm bath or shower
- Breathing and relaxation techniques
- Massage and acupressure
- TENS machine
- Medications such as nitrous oxide ‘gas’, morphine injection or epidural anaesthesia.

What else do I need to know?
After having the injections, it is important to avoid rubbing, touching or putting pressure on the injected area as this may reduce the effectiveness of the injections.

If you are happy to have the injections you will need to give your permission (consent).

Before and again after, being given the injections, you will be asked to tell us about your pain on a scale from 1 to 10. The pain relief gained from the injections is better for women when their pain score is 7 or more.