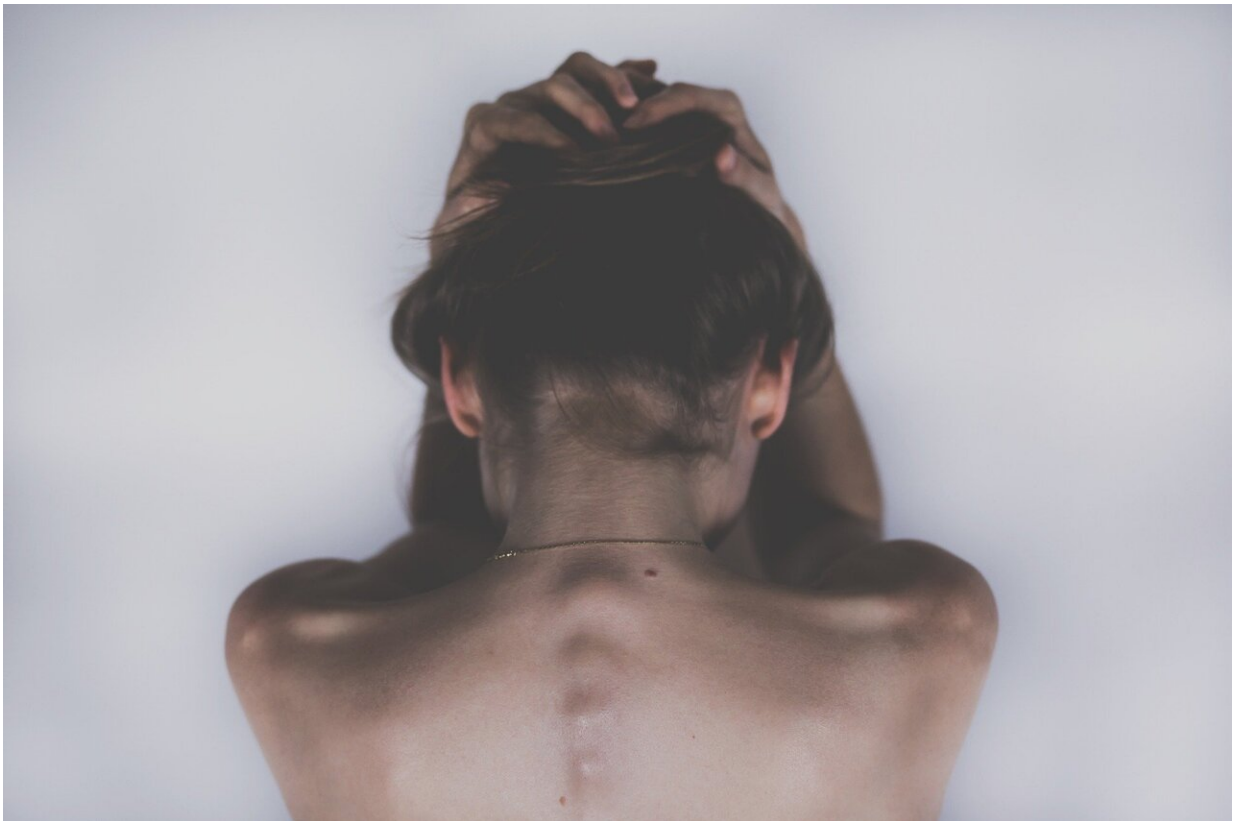


# Water injections to relieve back pain in labor no longer 'midwifery voodoo'

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Sterile water injections provide effective pain relief for women with labor back pain, according to University of Queensland-led research. Dr. Nigel Lee from the UQ School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work

said the injections were previously seen as controversial but this study shows they are safe and effective.

"Some midwives have used this practice in order to provide [pain relief](#) for a number of years, however until now, there has always been limited research to suggest that it works," Dr. Lee said.

"In fact, many hospitals refused to support the procedure, viewing it as 'midwifery voodoo'. This research provides definitive evidence that water injections offer effective [pain](#) relief for the majority of [women](#) with labor back pain."

Data was collected between 2012 and 2017 in one British and 15 Australian maternity units.

More than one thousand women in labor with severe back pain were given either water injections or a placebo of saline solution.

Dr. Lee said twice as many of the women who received the water injections reported their pain reduced by at least half, for 90 minutes or longer.

"The implications of the results of our trial are huge," he said.

"Unlike normal labor pain, back labor pain is unpredictable and often continues between contractions with no break. Most drugs provided for labor pain are ineffective for back pain which may persist even after an epidural has been given. Water injections have been shown to be simple, effective and safe, and to have no effect on birth outcomes."

Professor Sue Kildea from Charles Darwin University said the simplicity and safety of the procedure made it of enormous value to women around the world.

"Water injections will not only be of benefit to women wanting to avoid pain relieving drugs during labor, but also where women have little or no access to pain relief during childbirth, such as home birth and countries with developing [health systems](#)," Professor Kildea said.

The study is published in *The Lancet* journal *EClinicalMedicine*.

**More information:** Nigel Lee et al. Cesarean delivery rates and analgesia effectiveness following injections of sterile water for back pain in labor: A multicentre, randomized placebo controlled trial, *EClinicalMedicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100447](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100447)

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