

Serenity Birthing – Your Birth and  
Beyond, The Way that Resonates With You



# Module 10 – Pain Management



# Pain Management – what we'll cover

- ♥ Pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical pain management – Your options
- ♥ When and how your options might be offered/administered/useful
- ♥ How they may impact your baby's birth and ongoing development
- ♥ The difference between pain and suffering – Penny Simkin




# Pharmaceutical Pain Management

What is available at home/in midwifery led units:

 Paracetamol

 Pethidine

 Meptid

 Dia-morphine

 Entonox



# Pharmaceutical Pain Management

What is available in hospital ONLY:

♥ Epidural

♥ Spinal Block

♥ General Anaesthetic



# Paracetamol – taken orally

- ♥ Inhibitor of prostaglandin synthesis – prostaglandins cause contractions of the uterus, ripen the cervix, maintain good blood flow to the foetus, cause desired changes in the membranes
- ♥ Can lead to a longer latent phase of labour
- ♥ Some studies show an increased risk of childhood asthma
- ♥ Some studies show an association with the development of ADHD
- ♥ Some studies have shown an association with undescended testes



# Pethinidine – Opiate – Intramuscular injection

- ♥ Usually given together with an anti-emetic drug
- ♥ Relaxes smooth muscle so given in latent phase of labour
- ♥ Can make you feel drowsy, disoriented or out of control
- ♥ You might be less likely to move around and use upright positions for labour
- ♥ Can make your baby drowsy, have difficulty feeding, difficulties with reflexes and bonding and/or have breathing difficulties



# Meptid (meptazinol) – Opiate – Intramuscular injection

- ♥ Similar side effects as pethidine
- ♥ Less likely to have side effects for your baby
- ♥ Can cause more nausea and vomiting than pethidine





# Dia-Morphine – Opiate – Intramuscular injection

- ♥ Medical form of heroine
- ♥ Can provide more effective pain relief than pethidine
- ♥ Can suppress your baby's breathing
- ♥ Can suppress your baby's innate feeding reflexes and affect breastfeeding and bonding



# Gas & Air (Entonox) – Oxygen and Nitrous Oxide – Breath in with a mask

- ♥ You control how and when you use it and the effects wear off very quickly
- ♥ No known side effects to your baby
- ♥ Can make you feel drowsy, light-headed or nauseous, and you may be sick
- ♥ Can make your mouth feel very dry
- ♥ Is brought in canisters to home birth



# Epidural – Injected into the epidural space

- ♥ You will need a drip to stabilise blood pressure
- ♥ You will have a local anaesthetic where epidural catheter will be put in
- ♥ Opioids and local anaesthetic drugs are injected
- ♥ Continuous electric monitoring of your baby is required
- ♥ Your blood pressure will be taken regularly
- ♥ You will need a catheter in your bladder
- ♥ The medication does pass to your baby and can suppress their breathing, natural reflexes and affect breastfeeding and bonding
- ♥ Having an epidural significantly increases your chances of an assisted delivery and need for a caesarian



# Epidural – Impact on your birth experience

- ♥ Significantly interferes with some of the major hormones of labour and birth and prolactin – the mothering hormone
- ♥ Increases your chance of syntocinon/pitocin use
- ♥ Increased chance of having an assisted birth with the use of forceps or ventouse
- ♥ The increased chance of a caesarean birth is controversial
- ♥ Sleepy baby which can impact on breastfeeding



# Epidural – Other potential Side effects

- ♥ It may not work properly – Only partial effects so some sensation still there or over numbing effect
- ♥ Can cause itchy skin
- ♥ You may feel shivery or develop a fever which may lead to unnecessary administration of antibiotics
- ♥ There is a small risk of you having a sever headache (post dural puncture) and other nerve damage



You should NEVER be denied any form of  
pain management

It is never too late to have an epidural



# Spinal Block – Injected into your spinal fluid

- 🌈 Quickly delivers pain relief to your lower body
- 🌈 One-time injection rather than a continuous feed through a catheter
- 🌈 Often used for caesarean births and assisted births



# General Anaesthetic – Inhaled/injected into a vein

- ♥ You will not be aware of anything going on around you
- ♥ Less safe than regional anaesthesia
- ♥ Would only be used if you need a caesarean birth quickly
- ♥ You need recovery time afterwards so skin to skin may be tricky





It is important to manage the sensations of  
labour the way that feels right for you  
There is no ONE right way to birth your  
baby



# Non-Pharmaceutical Pain Management

What is available both at home/in hospital:

 Water

 Environment

 Laughter/Dancing/Cuddling

 Massage

 Temperature

 Tens

 Position

 Breathing/hypnotherapy/Hypno-birthing



# TENS – Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation

- ♥ Mild electrical impulses across the skin creates a tingling sensation
- ♥ Helps prevent pain signals from reaching the brain
- ♥ Stimulates natural endorphin release (your own innate natural pain killing substances).
- ♥ Small and portable - can easily move around
- ♥ Reusable sticky pads placed onto skin (usually on the low back) and wires attach from these to the control box
- ♥ Start on a low setting and gradually increase until the sensation feels strong but comfortable – you control it
- ♥ No known sideeffects of TENS (skin irritation rarely – hypo-allergenic available)
- ♥ Cannot be used in water
- ♥ Different makes - prices range from £25-£100



# Water

- ♥ Water is excellent for pain relief and relaxation
- ♥ Water helps you to feel lighter, more comfortable and can facilitate easier changes in position and movements during labour
- ♥ Helps to reduce stress hormones and increase Oxytocin
- ♥ A nice safe space for you to nest and hide in to promote oxytocin production
- ♥ Birthing in water has been shown to reduce the risk of episiotomy and tearing



# Water

- ♥ Birthing in water can facilitate the foetal ejection reflex avoiding the need for interference
- ♥ Water encourages relaxation of the pelvic floor
- ♥ Water encourages a gentle arrival and transition for babies. Sometimes they don't even realise they have been born
- ♥ Labouring and birthing in water reduces the risk of interventions such as synthetic hormones, epidural, assisted delivery.
- ♥ You can have a water birth at home, hire or purchase a pool of your own or inform your midwife if you would like to consider a water birth at hospital or in the birthing centre



# Hypnotherapy/Hyno-birthing

- ♥ Not about being hypnotised but about fostering a deep connection with your inner self through relaxation and guided mindfulness
- ♥ There are courses available which usually cost around £400. There are also books and CDs available that cost around £10 each (the Maggie Howell CDs are excellent) and online courses at around £50
- ♥ There are different style courses available
- ♥ Hypnotherapy helps you to learn to achieve a deep state of relaxation which will increase your Oxytocin and endorphins in labour and reduce your stress **no matter** the environment or situation you are in.
- ♥ Focus on the power of words, encouragement, self-help techniques and strategies you and your birthing companions can use during labour such as breathing and massage, movements to help relax you and encourage your labour
- ♥ Helps to encourage trust in your body through affirmations and mindfulness and helps to eliminate fear



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# Breathing Techniques

- ♥ There are many different breathing techniques for helping in labour
- ♥ Different types of breathing are suited to different labour stages e.g breathing your baby out during crowning – panting often helps here to prevent tearing
- ♥ Long, deep, slow breaths can be extremely helpful – find your rhythm, practice different kinds to see which suits you





# Massage

- ♥ It is best to learn and practice massage techniques before labour so that you can perfect your intuition and understanding between you and your birth companions so they know what you like and don't like and what you find helpful. Remember, your preferences may change in labour and they may adapt and change as labour progresses. Something that is useful in the early stages may not be so helpful later on
- ♥ Always be present and aware when performing massage techniques as a birth companion.
- ♥ Light touch and stroking are often extremely helpful in distracting from discomfort as well as soothing and boosting oxytocin. Stroking up and down the back or an arm or hand can be helpful as part of your rhythm and ritual as your labour progresses.



# Environment

- ♥️ Make your environment feel safe, secure and relaxing - you want that Oxytocin flowing and your primitive brain in charge. You need to feel safe, cocooned like a cat in a nest giving birth to her kittens.
- ♥️ At home this may mean picking a dark, quiet room with soft furnishings, space for you to move around or have a birthing ball or birth pool. Perhaps having candles or an aromatherapy diffuser, perhaps ambient music or even headphones
- ♥️ In a hospital or birth centre setting: bring your own pillows (there are never enough in hospital), ask for the lights to be dim, take a torch, electronic candles are allowed in hospitals (naked flames are not), perhaps a room spray or a diffuser
- ♥️ Take anything that makes you feel at home and comfortable that is easy for you to carry. Perhaps a nice blanket, music player
- ♥️ Take snacks and drinks - easy to nibble e.g. bananas, dates, energy bars, nuts, dried fruit.



# Laughter, Dancing, Cuddling

- 💖 Boost your Oxytocin and natural Endorphins - key to management of sensations in labour. Anything that makes you feel relaxed and happy will help things to get moving and help your natural coping mechanisms. Maybe watch some comedy, tell jokes and talk.
- 💖 Dance, swaying your hips and move in upright positions - helps to ease backache and pelvic discomfort as well as helping the baby into a good position for birth.
- 💖 If you have a partner present, cuddling, smooching and nipple stimulation are all fantastic ways of boosting Oxytocin. If you don't have a partner but have a good friend or companion who you feel comfortable cuddling up with, this can boost oxytocin too. A collection of doulas is called a cuddle so remember, we are always happy to offer cuddles to help you feel calm, safe and loved.



# Temperature

- ♥ Making sure you feel a comfortable temperature can feel such a wonderful release or relief in labour. Having flannels with you that can be applied as warm or cool compresses can feel amazing
- ♥ Ice chips – melt slowly to keep hydrated and cool
- ♥ Water mist sprays to a hot face or body can feel wonderful
- ♥ Warm compresses on the perineum can help to relieve discomfort of the baby crowning and the pressure can help to reduce tears



# Position

- ♥ Do not underestimate how much changing your position can ease discomfort in labour or aid the movement of the baby down through the pelvis. There are SO many positions and movements that you can do to help things move along from walking to lying on your side to rest, to using a birth ball, birthing stool or straps, to a robozo scarf that can be used to help ease discomfort
- ♥ Usually the best thing is to trust your instinct. If you feel you need to move then do it.
- ♥ Ask if you need help to get into a different position. If you need suggestions, ask your midwife or Doula who can give you ideas that you may feel would help you to feel more comfortable



# The Difference between Pain and Suffering

The amazing Penny Simkin says:

- ♥ Suffering is a sense of being overwhelmed, of being helpless, of being out of control
- ♥ You can have suffering without any pain
- ♥ If women are not treated kindly, then pain can turn into suffering



# Pain in labour – A different Perspective

- ♥ Pain of labour is a 'side effect' of a normal process **NOT** an injury
- ♥ There are other pains associated with physical exertion, for example when exercising which occur due to hard work **NOT** something going wrong
- ♥ Rule your labour – Understand what is happening and accept it. Allow it to happen, trust your body
- ♥ Pain is a physical sensation and it is unpleasant. It is associated with damage but also with exertion – think of the end and how elated you will feel
- ♥ Once a contraction is finished, you never have to have that one again – you are one step closer to meeting your baby, you did it, you are amazing!



Your pain should be kept at a manageable  
level

You should never suffer in labour





# Practical Exercise

- ♥ Take some time to consider what feels right and what feels important for you.
- ♥ Only you can know what is right for you
- ♥ Make sure that you have researched and understand all of your options so that any decisions you make, are fully informed so you can feel comfortable with any potential side effects that may occur with their use
- ♥ Remember to keep writing your thoughts and feelings in you diary and any questions that come up as a result of this module

