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## Natural Pain Management Techniques

### TENS – Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation

- Sends mild electrical impulses across the surface of the skin and along the nerves which feel like a tingling sensation.
- It helps to prevent pain signals from reaching the brain by confusing the nerve endings and blocking the pain gate.
- It stimulates natural endorphin release (your own innate natural pain killing substances).
- They are small and portable so that you can move around easily, change position and have it on without anyone really noticing attached to your belt, in a pocket or held in your hand.
- Reusable sticky pads are placed onto your skin (usually on your low back) and wires attach from these to the control box that you can hold or clip to your clothes.
- Start on a low setting and gradually increase until the sensation feels strong but comfortable. If the tingling sensation starts to feel painful or uncomfortable, it can be reduced slightly.
- There are no known sideeffects of TENS (apart from a few people finding skin sensitivity with the sticky pads – hypoallergenic ones are available) and they are considered extremely safe if the manufacturers instructions are followed.
- They cannot be used in water
- There are lots of different makes and the prices range from £25-£100 The Elle tens machine is designed specifically for labour. They are also useful for period pain, backaches and other muscular pains.

### Water

- Water is excellent for pain relief and relaxation
- In a pool or bath the buoyancy helps you to feel lighter, more comfortable and can facilitate easier changes in position and movements during labour
- Water helps to reduce stress hormones and increase Oxytocin
- The birth pool or bath can feel like 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
- 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 or Hypno-Birthing

- This is not about being hypnotised but about fostering a deep connection with your inner self through relaxation and guided mindfulness techniques.
- 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).
- There are different style courses available from a few main schools: Marie Mongan, Katherine Groves, Tamara Cianfini and Maggie Howell.
- 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.
- It focuses on the power of words, encouragement, self-help techniques and techniques you and your birthing companions can use during labour such as breathing and massage techniques and movements to help relax you and encourage your physiological labour to run smoothly.
- It helps to encourage your trust in your body through affirmations and mindfulness and helps to eliminate fear.
- I highly recommend using hypno-birthing techniques throughout your pregnancy and labour they are very effective

### 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

- Making your environment feel safe and secure and relaxing is of paramount importance. Remember 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. Consider that you may like ambient music playing or perhaps even headphones so that you can really centre yourself.



- ✓ In a hospital or birth centre setting perhaps bring your own pillows (there are never enough in hospital), ask for the lights to be dim, take a torch in case the midwife needs to be able to see anything more easily, electronic candles are allowed in hospitals (naked flames are not), perhaps a room spray or a diffuser so that you can have your favourite essential oils. Take anything that makes you feel at home and comfortable that is easy for you to carry. Perhaps a nice blanket. Also take snacks and drinks as usually there is only tea and rubbish toast or hospital food on offer. You want things that are easy to nibble such as bananas, dates, energy bars, nuts, dried fruit. Maybe your phone, iPod or CD player so that you can play a hypno-birthing CD or your favourite music – it is good to have different options in case your mood changes. You may feel like calm classical or perhaps even some rock or pop tunes to boost your mood.

### Laughter, Dancing, Cuddling

- Boosting your Oxytocin and natural Endorphins is the key to good management of sensations in your 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 moving in upright positions can help to ease backaches 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
- 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.

