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ABSTRACT:

The benefits of hypnotic analgesia as an adjunct to childbirth education were studied in 60 nulliparous women. Subjects were divided into high and low hypnotic susceptibility groups before receiving 6 sessions of childbirth education and skill mastery using an ischemic pain task. Half of the Ss in each group received a hypnotic induction at the beginning of each session; the remaining control Ss received relaxation and breathing exercises typically used in childbirth education. Both hypnotic Ss and highly susceptible Ss reported reduced pain. Hypnotically prepared births had shorter Stage 1 labors, less medication, higher Apgar scores, and more frequent spontaneous deliveries than control Ss' births. Highly susceptible, hypnotically treated women had lower depression scores after birth than women in the other 3 groups. We propose that repeated skill mastery facilitated the effectiveness of hypnosis in our study.