Reading

1 Before you read the article, discuss these questions with a partner.

Can you give a definition of 'pain'?
- Why do we feel pain?
- What would happen if you could feel no pain?

2 Read the article, and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).

1 People who are born unable to feel pain are unlucky. _____

2 Pain starts in the brain. _____
3 Chronic pain lasts longer than acute pain. _____
4 All drugs which stop pain work directly on the brain. _____
5 'Phantom limb' pain is felt by people who have lost an arm or leg. _____

3 Complete the gaps using verbs from the article. You may need to change the tense.

1 She wears a mask to p_____ the area of burnt skin.

2 The pain in your legs should go when we t_____ your back problem.

3 She used breathing exercises and gas and air to m_____ the pain of childbirth.

4 A local anaesthetic will p_____ you feeling any pain during the operation.

5 Breathing exercises help c_____ the pain to some extent.

6 When you s_____ a serious injury, you may not feel pain immediately.

PAIN

Pain is a vital part of our body's defences, and without it we could not survive.

Pain warns us what things are dangerous, and so helps us avoid damage to our body. If the body is already damaged, pain helps with healing because it makes us protect our injuries. Some babies are born with a rare condition that makes them unable to feel pain. They do not learn the lessons that pain teaches, and as a result suffer many fractures and infections.

Pain happens when nerve endings in our skin and our internal organs send messages through the central nervous system to our brain. The brain itself cannot feel pain. There are two types of pain – acute pain, which lasts a short time and is removed when the cause is cured, and chronic pain, which can last a lifetime and cannot usually be treated. Chronic pain must be managed using drugs or other methods.

Drugs relieve pain in two ways. Some block the nerves' messages and prevent them getting to the brain. Others change the way the brain receives the messages, reducing their effect. Many methods of controlling chronic pain without drugs have been developed. These include hypnosis, acupuncture, massage, and electronic stimulation of nerves.

Pain sometimes works in strange ways. It is possible, for example, to suffer a serious injury but not feel any pain – soldiers in battle may not feel pain from wounds until after the battle. The opposite can happen too – patients who lose a limb can continue to feel pain in the limb long afterwards, even though it is missing. This 'phantom limb' pain is an example of neuropathic pain, caused by damage to the remaining nerves.

Listen to Janice and Karen talking about their experiences of pain relief in labour. Read the sentences and choose the correct option

1   Their babies are *different sexes / the same sex.*

2   Karen started with *gas and air / Pethidine.*

3   Gas and air *made / didn't make* her feel good.

4   The epidural relieved *all / some* of the pain.

5   Janice *had / didn't have* gas and air.

6   Janice lost *no / all* feeling during her previous birth.

🎧 Complete these sentences with verbs below, then listen again to check.

became	got	took away
cope with	losing	wears off
feel	relieve	

1   It does _____ the pain a bit ...

2   ... the effect _____ very quickly.

3   It made me _____ sick too.

4   ... when the pain _____ unbearable, I had an epidural

5   Did that help you _____ the pain?

6   It _____ the pain completely!

7   I decided to have gas and air if the pain _____ worse ...

8   I didn't like _____ all sensation.

Patient care

Questions to assess pain

Here are some of the basic questions to ask a patient when assessing pain. Match the beginning of each sentence to the end.

a) Where does

b) Does it

c) When did it start

d) Does the pain

e) How much

f) Can you

g) Does anything make

h) What makes it

- worse

- it hurt?

- does it hurt?

- describe the pain?

- hurting?

- hurt all the time?

- Stay in one place or move around?

- the pain feel better?