



Labour and/or Birth Using Water

INFORMATION FOR WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

At Dhelkaya Health you may choose to labour and birth through water if it is considered a safe option for you and your baby when you have a low risk pregnancy. This handout is designed to help you make an informed choice.

Benefits for you and your baby

Water immersion during labour can help make your labour experience more enjoyable and reduce the need for pain relief. Water can provide you with extra comfort and mobility, a deeper sense of relaxation and improve blood flow to your baby.

Common concerns about using water for labour and/or birth

Getting too hot in the water can be a concern as this may increase the baby's heart rate. You should feel comfortable in the water but not too hot. Your midwife will check the water temperature regularly.

Keeping the water clean during labour is important to minimise the possibility of infection. Your midwife will follow strict guidelines to ensure the water is kept clean during birthing.

Preventing water inhalation is another common concern. During pregnancy your baby is surrounded by fluid and is never at risk of breathing the fluid in. Babies have several protective mechanisms to stop them from breathing under water. If you choose to stay in the water then it is important that your baby is born under water, then gently but immediately lifted out into the air. Your baby's head should then be kept out of the water so breathing can begin. This negates the risk of your baby breathing in water.



Considerations for using water during labour and/or birth

You must be prepared to have a discussion with your Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) midwife and/or General Practitioner Obstetrician (GPO) if you fit the criteria to use the bath. Part of this discussion includes your acceptance to leave the bath if advised to do so.

Your MGP midwife will advise you of the best time to enter the water. You must never be alone while immersed in the water and the bath must be filled with only pure tap water with no additives such as bath oils, gels, soaps or salt. When sitting in the bath or pool the water should reach the level of your breasts.

When in the bath you should feel comfortably warm. You can leave the water at any time and you must leave the water to urinate. You should keep well hydrated throughout labour to avoid dehydration.



Exploring your choices

If you are interested in water immersion for labour and/or birth talk with your MGP midwife and GPO to find out if this is a safe and suitable option for you. Ask about the risks and benefits for you and your baby, and make sure you understand the circumstances in which you would be asked to leave the bath during birth.

If you have any further questions or require additional information please discuss the use of water during labour and/or birth with your MGP midwife and/or GPO.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Seeking out more information about the use of water for labour and/or birth will help you to be fully prepared for the experience.

The Cochrane Library provides a full overview of all the latest research and information at www.thecochranelibrary.com

Bovbjerg, M., Cheyney, M., and Caughey, A. (2021). Maternal and neonatal outcomes following waterbirth: a cohort study of 17 530 waterbirths and 17 530 propensity score-matched land births. Published Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists. BJOG. An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. <https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1471-0528.17009>

Acknowledgements

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The Royal Women's Hospital. (2018) Water Birth at the Women's. Retrieved 1/3/23 from <https://www.thewomens.org.au/>