



Labour using water

- The bath or pool 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.
- You should feel comfortably warm.
- You can leave the water at any time.
- You must leave the water to urinate.
- You should keep well hydrated throughout labour to avoid dehydration.
- You must leave the water when advised to do so by the midwife and/or doctor.
- You cannot have an injection for pain relief or an epidural when in the water but it is possible to use 'gas' if desired.

You should sign the 'Documentation of Informed Choice'.



Further information

You may wish to seek out more information about the use of water for labour which will help you to be fully prepared for the experience.

The latest Cochrane review provides a full overview of all the latest research and information at: www.thecochranelibrary.com
If you have any further questions or require additional information please discuss the use of water during labour and/or birth with your midwife or doctor.

Disclaimer: The advice and information contained herein is provided in good faith as a public service. However the accuracy of any statements made is not guaranteed and it is the responsibility of readers to make their own enquiries as to the accuracy, currency and appropriateness of any information or advice provided. Liability for any act or omission occurring in reliance on this document or for any loss, damage or injury occurring as a consequence of such act or omission is expressly disclaimed.

The Women's and Newborns' Health Network does not necessarily advocate 'water birth' but recognises that women have a right to be informed and make the choice to use water during labour and/or birth.

Photos used with kind permission by Fiona Colvin Photography
www.fionacolvin.com

Reproduced with permission of:
Women's and Newborns' Health Network
and Women and Newborn Health Service
Email: ogccu@health.wa.gov.au
Website: <http://wnhs.health.wa.gov.au>

This information is available in alternative formats upon request.

Produced by
Osborne Park Hospital,
Osborne Place Stirling, WA 6021

HP11903 OCT'10



You may be considering using water for pain relief during the first stage of your labour or having a waterbirth. This brochure is designed to help you make an informed choice for you and your baby.

Osborne Park Hospital does not perform waterbirths. However labouring in water is an option.

The Western Australian Women's and Newborns' Health Network has developed statewide guidelines to enable midwives and doctors to provide care that is as safe as possible for healthy pregnant women choosing to use water during labour and/or birth.



Benefits for you and your baby

- Water immersion in a bath and/or pool during the first stage of labour has been shown to decrease the need for pain relieving drugs and make the experience more enjoyable.
- Waterbirths are associated with low-risks for both the woman and baby when care is provided by midwives and/or doctors who follow best practice guidelines.

Exploring your choices

- Osborne Park Hospital does not offer waterbirths. For a list of metropolitan hospitals that do offer waterbirths, discuss with a midwife and/or doctor.
- Write down what you would like in your birth plan.
- Talk to a midwife and/or doctor to find out more information, in particular:
 - whether there are any reasons why immersion in water during the first stage of labour is not advisable for you
 - the benefits and risks to you and your baby
 - details about when you would be required to leave the water.
- You will be asked to sign an agreement form if you choose to use water for your first stage of labour at Osborne Park Hospital.

Common concerns about using water for labour

You and your baby may get too hot

If your body overheats your baby may also get too hot and this can cause the baby's heart rate to increase. You should feel comfortable in the water but not too hot. Your midwife will check the water temperature regularly while you are in the water during labour.

Your baby may develop an infection

There are strict guidelines for keeping the water clean during labour and for cleaning the bath/pool to minimise the possibility of infection.

Who can use water for labour and/or birth?

You and your baby must fit all of the following criteria to use a bath or pool for your labour:

- Be healthy with no complications of pregnancy.
- Be having only one baby who is presenting head first.
- Be at least 37 weeks pregnant.
- Not be a carrier of, or infected with HIV, Hepatitis B or C virus.
- Not be excessively overweight.
- Not have broken your waters for longer than 18-24 hours (unless antibiotics have already been started).
- The colour of your broken waters must remain clear.
- Your baby's heart rate must remain within the normal range.
- You must not enter water until four hours after receiving an injection for pain relief.

Conditions for using water during your labour

- You must never be alone while immersed in the water.
- The midwife or doctor will advise you about the best time to enter the water, which is when labour is becoming stronger.

