

Policy for First Stage Labour & Birth in Water

August 2017



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Copies of this brochure and the related policy, *First Stage Labour and Birth in Water*, are available from www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/perinatal

For more information

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North Adelaide, SA 5006
www.wch.sa.gov.au

Non- English speaking: for information in language other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call the Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 82261990



The use of water immersion during labour provides you with an alternative option for comfort, mobility and privacy. You may also wish to give birth in water.

Water immersion in a birth pool or bath during labour and birth has been shown to reduce pain and the need for pain relieving drugs and also to increase women's satisfaction with the experience. It may even shorten the length of labour.

Research data shows that women at low risk of complications using water immersion for labour and/or birth have similar outcomes to women that do not use water immersion in terms of:

- ◇ the need to use drugs to help labour progress
- ◇ caesarean or assisted births
- ◇ rates of infection in women
- ◇ need for stitches in the perineum after birth
- ◇ overall blood loss.

The use of water immersion may make it difficult to easily recognise some complications. You may be asked to leave the water if your midwife or doctor is concerned.

Concerns have been raised previously that your baby may be at increased risk of infection if you use water immersion in labour and birth. There are strict guidelines around the types of bath/pool used, cleaning regimes and water management to minimise this risk. Research shows no increased risk of infection when these guidelines are followed.

Another concern is that your baby may breathe under the water and inhale the water. To avoid this potential, your baby should be born completely under the water and then gently lifted into the air. Your baby's head should then remain above the water. Again, research shows no increased risk of breathing problems if these guidelines are followed.



You can consider undertaking first stage labour and/or birth in water if **all** of these points apply to you:

- ◇ You are able to be cared for continuously by a midwife or doctor experienced in managing water births should you decide to stay in the water
- ◇ You have an uncomplicated pregnancy with only one (1) baby that is presenting head first
- ◇ You are between 37 and 42 weeks pregnant
- ◇ You do not have a medical condition that may compromise your safety or that of your baby
- ◇ You are not overweight & have a Body Mass Index less than 35kg/m² at the commencement of labour
- ◇ You do not want to have epidural, spinal or narcotic pain relief during labour
- ◇ You do not have an altered state of consciousness
- ◇ You or your baby does not require a level of monitoring that is difficult to achieve in the water
- ◇ You are prepared to be transferred out of the water if necessary
- ◇ You have been **all** informed of the Department of Health and Ageing policy on **First Stage Labour and Birth in Water**
- ◇ You have read this brochure, discussed it with your midwife or doctor and signed the consent form "Consent to first stage labour and birth in water MR 82WB".

Safety for you and your baby is the main concern when deciding to undertake first stage labour and/or give birth in water.