

Maternity

Having a waterbirth

At University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire, women can choose to have their baby in water. This is called a waterbirth. There are 4 birthing pools in the Lucina Birth Centre and 1 on the Labour Ward.

Water has been used for many years for pain relief in labour. All healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies, at full term, should have the choice of having a waterbirth.

Will water help?

Women and midwives say that being in water during labour can:

- Help the mum feel calm and relaxed.
- Make contractions easier to manage.
- Help labour go faster so the mum might not need medicine to speed it up.
- Reduce the need for pain medicine.
- Improve the birth experience for both the women and her family.

Can every mum have a waterbirth?

Any woman can choose to have a waterbirth. A midwife will then do a risk assessment that is individualised to your needs to ensure that a waterbirth is safe for you, and they will advise you if this is not recommended.



Risk assessment

You **can use** the birthing pool if:

- You are having a 'low risk' pregnancy, and it is between 37 and 42 weeks (based on your ultrasound scan).
- You are having 1 baby, not twins or more, and the baby's head is down.
- You can move around easily and can get in and out of the pool without help.
- A midwife checks everything and agrees it is safe for you and your baby.

Water is good for pain relief during the early part of labour as you can rest if the pain stops.

If your labour is not established, the contractions may lessen or stop. You might need to get out of the pool and get back in later when labour is really happening.

You can't use the pool if:

- Your baby is not head down, for example, breech.
- Your waters broke more than 24 hours ago.
- You have had pain medicine like Pethidine.

In the birthing pool

If you are in water, your baby's heartbeat will still need to be monitored by a Midwife during labour, but this will be done every now and then, not all the time. Listening into your baby's heartbeat will be every 15 minutes in first stage of labour, which is until your cervix is fully dilated. And then the Midwife will listen in to your baby's heartbeat every five minutes in second stage, when you are pushing to deliver your baby. The midwife will use either a pinard stethoscope or a handheld Doppler to listen to the heartbeat.

If that the midwife says your baby's heartbeat needs to be continually monitored; this can be done using telemetry in the pool on the Labour Ward. Your midwife will explain.

Patient Information

Your temperature and pulse will also be checked at regular intervals.

If there are any concerns about the wellbeing of you or your baby, you will be asked to leave the pool for assessment.

You will be encouraged to drink plenty of water or isotonic drinks, like Powerade, to prevent dehydration in the warm pool.

If you need any more pain relief, you can use 'Gas and Air' (Nitrous Oxide and Oxygen).

Why you might leave the birthing pool

You might need to leave the birthing pool during labour. Here are some reasons why:

- If there are any concerns about the wellbeing of you or your baby.
- If you need more pain relief.
- Your labour is taking too long.
- Your baby has done a poo in your tummy (passed Meconium)
- Your baby is showing signs of distress
- If you change your mind and want to get out of the pool.

In there is a fire, you will need to get out quickly for safety.

Advice and information

If you have any questions or concerns, you can talk to your community midwife, who is there to help.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact your community midwife.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Patient Information

Did we get it right?

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