

Patient Information

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Information leaflet for patients requesting a waterbirth

Introduction

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire offers a waterbirth service within the maternity unit. There are 4 static pools within the Lucina Birth Centre and one static pool on the Labour Ward. Water has been used for many years as a source of pain relief for women in labour. All healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies, at full term, should have the option of a waterbirth available to them.

Will water help?

Experiences drawn from both women and midwives suggest that labour and birth in water can:

- Help with relaxation and increase the ability to cope with contractions.
- Help to shorten the labour and so prevent the need for drugs that speed up labour.
- Reduce the need for other pain relieving drugs.
- Enhance the birth experience for both the women and their families.

Some research studies have found few significant differences between waterbirth and conventional births.

How do you know if you are suitable for a Waterbirth?

Any woman can be considered to labour and/or give birth in the birthing pool. Many factors need to be considered but this may be discussed with



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your midwife. A risk assessment may be needed and will take place to decide if it is suitable for you to labour and/or give birth in the birthing pool.

Risk assessment/Suitability

You **may** enter the birthing pool if:

- You are following the 'low risk' care pathway and the pregnancy is between 37-40 weeks +12 days gestation (by ultrasound scan)
- Single (not twins or more) pregnancy, baby's head first
- You are mobile and able to get in and out of the pool without help
- An overall clinical assessment will be performed prior to you entering the pool to ensure you are within the boundaries of normality

Water is an excellent form of pain relief during the latent phase of labour as it enables you to rest as your contractions may ease.

If your labour is not established, the contractions may subside. This is normal and it may be necessary for you to leave the pool. You can return to the pool once your labour becomes established.

You are **not suitable** to enter the pool if:

- Your baby is not head first, for example, breech
- You have prolonged rupture of membranes (the waters have broken) for more than 24 hours
- You have had any drugs such as Pethidine

Care in labour

Your baby will still need to be monitored during the labour but this will be done intermittently. The midwife will use either a pinard stethoscope or a hand held Doppler to listen to the heartbeat.

If you decide to use the pool but have been advised that your baby's heartbeat needs to be continually monitored; this can be done using telemetry in the pool on the Labour Ward. Your midwife can advise on this.

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

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Should there be any concerns regarding the wellbeing of you or your baby, you will be asked to leave the pool for further assessment.

You will be encouraged to drink plenty of water or isotonic drinks (such as Powerade) to prevent dehydration in the warm, humid environment.

Should you require any further pain relief you may use 'Gas and Air' (Nitrous oxide and oxygen).

Reasons for leaving the pool

- You will be asked to leave the pool should there be any concerns regarding the wellbeing of you or your baby.
- If you require additional pain relief.
- Your labour may not be progressing.
- Your baby may have opened its bowel (passed Meconium)
- Your baby is showing signs of distress
- Or you may even change your mind. If you have any questions or concerns you can discuss them at any time with your attending midwife.
- In case of fire you will need to leave the birthing pool

For further advice and information

Please feel free to discuss this further with your Community Midwife.

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.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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