

## If you choose to use water during your labour or birth:

- discuss your options carefully with your midwife or doctor
- make sure your support people are aware of your plans
- plan to get into the pool when labour is progressing normally and your cervix is at least 4-5cm dilated
- make sure that you do not get too hot. The water temperature should be checked regularly and you should get out of the pool if you feel hot or you have a temperature
- drink plenty of fluids and have cool wetcloths available to keep you comfortable
- you can get out of the pool at any time if you feel uncomfortable. If all is well, you can choose to stay in the pool for the birth or you can get out of the pool for the birth
- be prepared to get out of the pool if asked to by your midwife or doctor.

## More information

It is important that you are well informed about your choices in labour and birth. Talk to your midwife or doctor and check out the online resources below to help guide your decision.

### Pools to buy/hire and related info:

[www.h2ohbaby.co.nz](http://www.h2ohbaby.co.nz)

[www.wondermum.co.nz/water-birth/](http://www.wondermum.co.nz/water-birth/)

### These references can be found on Google

Warm water immersion in labour and birth – Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2017) [link](#)

Consensus statement: The use of water for labour and birth – New Zealand College Of Midwives (2015) [link](#)

Immersion in water for labour and birth– Royal College of Midwives (2012) [link](#)

Immersion in water for labour and birth – Cochrane (2009) [link](#)

### The Waitemata DHB guideline can be printed for you by your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC)

Waitemata DHB guideline – Water for labour and birth [link](#)



# Labour and birth in water

*What you need to know*

## Birthing pools

North Shore and Waitakere Hospitals provide the option of using deep water pools for pain relief in labour and water birth. Birthing pools are also available to buy or hire privately if you are planning a home birth.

There is a variation in views between practitioners regarding the relative safety of birth in water. Currently there is insufficient high quality evidence to either recommend or discourage birth in water.

## Benefits of using water for labour and birth

Many women report feeling more relaxed in warm water and enjoy the feeling of weightlessness. Being in water allows you to move freely and find more comfortable positions in labour. Many women who use water for pain relief find it very helpful and are less likely to need other forms of pain relief including epidural. Labouring in water is shown to shorten the length of the first stage of labour as long as you don't get in the pool too early.

Women who have used water for their labour or birth often say that they are very satisfied with their birth experience and would use water again.

## Risks of using water for labour and birth

It is possible to become too hot and this can divert blood flow away from your placenta and baby. You may become dehydrated which can slow down your labour. There have been some isolated cases

where inappropriate birth in water has been linked with potential harm to the baby. Having a midwife or doctor who is experienced with water birth practice is an important safety measure.

In some cases it may be recommended to labour in the pool for pain relief, but then get out to birth your baby. It is important that you have a clear birth plan with your midwife or doctor before going into labour.

## Labour in water is not recommended if:

- there are any concerns regarding your own health or the health/wellbeing of your baby
- you have any underlying illness or infection
- you have had any significant bleeding in pregnancy or labour
- you are less than 37 weeks pregnant
- you are unwell with a temperature or diarrhoea
- you have epilepsy or high blood pressure
- you have diabetes requiring an insulin infusion in labour
- your baby is unusually large or small
- your baby is not lying in the normal head-down position
- your baby's heart beat needs to be monitored continuously and there are no facilities do this in water
- you have had strong pain relief within the previous four hours.

