



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Your guide to waterbirth

Issued by Obstetrics and Gynaecology

building a caring future

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[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

**This information leaflet is for women considering having a waterbirth.**

## **Who can have a waterbirth?**

You should have the choice of using water as a form of pain relief during labour and be able to proceed to a water birth if you:

- Are assessed as low risk at booking
- Have no identified complications during pregnancy
- Are between 37 - 42 weeks pregnant.

Immersion in water for relaxation and pain relief has been used for many years. It is an option that is widely available to women in hospital and in the community setting throughout Britain.

## **What are the benefits of using water during labour?**

- Natural form of pain relief due to the soothing effects of the water, which leads to an increase in the body's endorphin production, which is our own natural pain killer
- Encourages relaxation, which may reduce anxiety
- Allows increased mobility
- Helps women to stay in control
- Can help reduce the need for drugs
- May actually speed up labour
- Encourages a normal and natural labour

## What are the benefits of delivery in water?

- May enhance the woman's birth experience
- The birth may be less traumatic for the mother & baby
- May reduce the incidence of tears and episiotomies
- May result in 'calmer' babies from slower delivery controlled by mother
- May reduce the requirement for drugs to aid delivery of the placenta

However it must be noted that there is no hard evidence to prove that water birth is better or worse, safer or less safe, for mother or baby.

## Are there any risks?

- Women may feel very tired
- In some cases may actually slow labour down
- Women may become too hot, which can have an adverse effect if not corrected
- Emergency situations may arise and you will be asked to get out of the pool

The following two risks are rare and our maternity service has developed guidelines to minimise these risks.

- There is a risk of waterborne infection
- Your baby may start to breath under water

## Where can I have a waterbirth?

We have birthing pools in all our midwifery led units at Alnwick, Berwick, Hexham and the Northumbria in Cramlington. Each unit has guidelines in place which identify reasons when it may not be safe for you to use the pool.

Your midwife will advise you at the time or you may discuss the options with your community midwife.

## What do I need to bring with me?

- Whatever you decide to wear - old baggy T shirt, bra, or nothing at all
- Towelling bathrobe
- Large bath sheets or towels (for water birth in hospital we can provide towels)
- Inflatable neck pillow (optional)
- CDs / Snacks for partner etc
- Toiletries such as water spray, facecloth or sponge
- Baby clothes including hat and socks or booties
- Your birth partner

## What happens during labour?

Generally labour is managed the same as any other labour apart from:

- The birthing pool temperature is checked half hourly and maintained within a recommended range
- Your temperature is checked hourly
- You may use entonox in the pool
- If you would like an injection for pain relief, you will have to come out of the pool and stay out for at least two hours or until you are feeling less drowsy

You may choose to use the pool for labour only, opting to get out of the pool to have your baby. The choice is always yours providing everything remains normal.

You will be asked to leave the pool for the following reasons

- To use the toilet
- If there is any evidence of meconium staining (when the baby opens its bowels) when your waters break
- If there is any difficulty hearing your baby's heart rate or if any irregularity is identified
- If your blood pressure, temperature or pulse rate become abnormal
- If your labour is not progressing normally
- For delivery of the placenta if it is not delivered naturally within an hour of the birth of your baby

## Useful contact numbers

### **The Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital**

Northumbria Way

Cramlington

NE23 6NZ

**Pregnancy assessment unit:** 0191 607 2815

**Birth centre:** 0191 607 2318

**Ward 16:** 0191 607 2016

### **Berwick Midwifery Led Unit**

High Green

Berwick-upon-Tweed

TD15 1LT

01289 356 622

### **Hexham Midwifery Led Unit**

Corbridge Road

Hexham

NE46 1QJ

01434 655 352

### **Hillcrest Midwifery Led Unit**

Infirmery Drive

Alnwick

NE66 2NS

01665 626



## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

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