



Sage-Femme Midwifery, PLLC

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Water and Birth

Prenatal Education: During regular prenatal visits, a thorough explanation of the process of using water during labor and birth will be discussed. Water at birth is not a method, but a tool to aid in the natural process of birth. Therefore, you may labor in water and may birth “on land” or in water, depending on your situation at the time. There are many good books and DVDs about water and birth, as well as information on the Internet. Please be sure to avail yourself of these resources.

Qualifications of Birth Attendants: Birth attendants should be experienced birth professionals (traditional Midwives, CPMs, CMs, CNMs, FPs, OBs) with experience using water during labor and birth. Please discuss with your midwife what her contraindications are concerning birth and water.

Water Temperature: Temperatures may vary depending on your comfort. Attention must be given to the possibility of dehydration. Temperature should not exceed 99 degrees, with 91-96 degrees optimal during active labor. The temperature should be 98-99 degrees for the emergence of the baby. It is very important to ensure that you and the attendants do not get dehydrated as being in the pool can mask the signs that we normally watch for (sweating profusely or lack of sweating). Drinking an electrolyte balanced drink is helpful.

Baby Heart Tones: Periodic auscultation of the baby’s heart tones with a portable Doppler is easy. If a submersible unit is not available, you just need to lift your belly out of the water for easy access.

Labor: General reminder...when in doubt, get out. In other words, if there is any doubt about the condition of either you or the baby, get out of the pool. Also, water relaxes very well. When the pool is in use and labor is in process, be prepared for birth in the water or as you come out of the pool. Immersion in warm water may be used at any point in labor, adopting any desired labor position. Freedom of movement allows you to find your own instinctual birthing position. When cervical dilation is 0-5cm, if labor slows and contractions decrease while in the pool, it may be best to get out and walk around until labor has progressed further, unless a rest is needed in which case a pool is ideal. Where cervical dilation is 5cm or more, the benefits of warm water are often increased. Sometimes, though labor may appear to slow and decrease in intensity at this point, be prepared! Birth can happen quickly and easily in the water because of the deep relaxation of all the muscles involved. Everything is still working very efficiently, just in the utmost state of relaxation and absence of gravity.

Birth: Perineal support is still possible while in the pool, with some flexibility on the part of the care provider. If the cord is wrapped around the baby, unwrapping it while the baby is still under water if all looks well is easiest, as the baby is floating and easy to roll. Once the baby is born, the baby’s face should be brought out of the water within 10-20 seconds. The warm water will keep the baby’s body warm but attention must be given to the room air temperature as well so that the baby does not get chilled. The cord is likely to pulsate for longer



than when born “on land”, as the warm water keeps the cord expanded. If the baby is breathing and pink and vigorous, after a moderate amount of time (5-15 minutes), the cord can be clamped and cut depending on your midwife’s guidelines.

Getting in and out of the pool – The Sit & Swing Method

1. Sit on the side of the pool holding a top chamber handle.
2. Step one leg at a time over the side of the pool wall, so that you are sitting with your feet in the water.
3. Gently lower into the pool.
4. If there is difficulty with stepping a leg over the pool wall, the top chamber can be temporarily deflated so that you sit on the lower chamber. Perform the “Sit & Swing” with the assistance of one other person.

Reclining, sitting, leaning forward, squatting and bracing positions are all easy to achieve by utilizing the various handles within the pool. Beware of spills – If you feel the water level is too high for you or for you and your partner in the pool, remove some water with a sterile bucket.

Trial Run

We recommend doing a trial run approximately one month prior to your due date. At this time, you can ensure that there are no leaks in the pool, determine how much hot water is available in your hot water tank and how long it will take to fill the pool, as well as the logistics of emptying the pool.

Supplies

Gather the following supplies one month prior to your due date:

- An adaptor for the hose to faucet connection (Claber 8587 Quick-Fit Tap Connector Set is easiest, sold on Amazon)
- A large plastic colander
- A new hose (RV/Marine, white or blue, lead-free, 50 ft. is usually plenty)
- Lowe’s: FLEXON Marine & RV Hose 25 ft.
- Amazon: Camco 22853 Premium Drinking Water Hose (5/8"ID x 50') - Lead Free
- Home Depot: Element 1/2 in. x 50 ft. RV & Marine Hose
- InHisHands.com or Walmart: Swan House ELMRV12050 1/2 in x 50' Marine & Camper Water Hose
- Optional: a plastic step stool, mask, inflatable ring, inexpensive hand mirror (plastic, submersible)
- Plastic liner for under pool (shower curtain liner, tarp, etc.)
- 1 large bottle of hydrogen peroxide
- A plastic bucket (3-5 gallon)
- A large sponge
- Lots of towels





Setting up the Pool

1. Decide on a location for the pool
 - a. Leave 2 feet of space around all sides
 - b. Be sure the hose will reach from the water source to the pool
2. Prepare the floor's surface
 - a. Put down a water resistant barrier (tarp, shower curtain liner, garbage bags)
 - b. Top with water absorbent layer (towels, blankets)
 - c. Remove all electrical items and tripping hazards from around the pool
3. Unpack the pool
4. Inflate the pool (and the lid if there is one) using the air pump, starting with the lower chambers and moving up
 - a. Check that all valves are closed tightly
 - b. The chambers will feel firm but not hard (do not overinflate!). The floor and sides will feel firmer once water is added.
5. Place the personal liner in the pool (for the birth, NOT for the trial run)
6. Attach the hose to the water source and place the other end in the pool
7. Fill the pool with 4 inches of cold water, then hot water (not to exceed 140 degrees)
 - a. Use the thermometer to determine the temperature
 - b. Add to the body of water, not against the sides
 - c. If using the pool later, fill with slightly warmer water and put the lid on it, if one was provided
8. Fill to the top of the lower chamber
 - a. Get into the pool to determine if the depth of the water is where you want it
9. Do NOT leave pool fully inflated for more than 24 hours as this will stress the seams
 - a. After 24 hours, empty the pool and refill it with clean water

Emptying the Pool

*****DUE TO THE RISK OF ELECTRIC SHOCK, NO ONE SHOULD BE IN THE POOL
WHILE THE SUMP PUMP IS OPERATING!*****

1. Scoop out any floating debris with a bucket
2. Attach the hose to the sump pump and place the other end in the toilet, placing something heavy on the lid or out a window or in the bathtub
3. Place the sump pump into a colander in the corner of the pool
4. Plug the pump in
 - a. Stay with the pool until the water is just a few inches deep. NEVER leave the pool unattended with the sump pump on! It only takes approximately 10-20 minutes.
5. Turn off the sump pump and remove it from the pool
6. Lift the edge of the liner and scoop out the remaining water with a bucket
7. Remove the liner and throw it away



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Cleaning Pool & Sump Pump

1. Wipe down the entire pool with a hydrogen peroxide (1 part) / water (3 parts) solution & dry the pool with a clean, soft towel.
2. Scrub the bottom of the sump pump with the solution
3. Put the sump pump in a bucket with 5 inches of solution in it and place it in the bathtub
 - a. Put a bowl over the hose opening of the pump
 - b. Plug in the pump
 - c. Hold the bowl securely
 - d. Flush the solution through the pump for 3 minutes
 - e. Unplug, drain and towel dry
4. Throw away the hose (or use it for outside watering)

Deflating Pool

1. After pool is completely dry, open all valves
2. Use the deflating option on the air pump to remove the air
3. Fold up the pool towards the valves, squeezing out any remaining air
4. Pack the pool (and lid) back into its original bag
5. Place the air pump, sump pump and water thermometer back into the tote bag

Returning Pool

Plan to return the pool **within 1 week of the birth**. The following items should be returned: Pool, Lid (if it came with one), Air Pump, Sump Pump, Water Thermometer, Tote Bag. Please do not leave it in the car during very hot or very cold temperatures as this will damage the pool. **If the pool is not cleaned and dried, is returned late, or is not placed back in its carrying case properly, there will be a \$30 service fee.**

Call or email Suzi to make arrangements.

Questions or Concerns: Suzi 396-6342 or suzi@sage-femmemidwifery.com

When you receive the pool, it should be clean and include the pool, a personal liner, an air pump, a sump pump and a water thermometer. If you are missing ANY of these items or the pool is not clean, please contact us immediately. While setting up the pool, if you have any questions, please contact us immediately.