

Waterbirth & Hydrotherapy in Labor

The use of water is one of the many options available for your labor and birth. Before planning to give birth in the water however, there are some things you should know. Please review the statements below and initial that you have read and understand each line.

Giving birth underwater is generally considered safe and is popular in areas of the US and many other countries. However, medical research is limited as to the effects of waterbirth on mother and infant. The proposed benefits of waterbirth include less pain, improved relaxation, decreased need for episiotomy, lower blood pressure, decreased anxiety and often a faster labor. As stated before, not all of these benefits can be supported by research. The proposed risks of waterbirth are believed to include dehydration of the mother, an increased chance of infection, and increased chance of bleeding, slips/falls while getting out of the tub and overheating. Possible risks specific to baby include possible inhalation of water in the lungs, overheating, and loss of body heat. In 0.15 to 1.5% of all births, underwater or not, there is some risk of a difficult delivery of the baby's shoulders. Shoulder dystocia is not necessarily increased by waterbirth. However, managing shoulder dystocia may be more difficult in the tub. You may be asked to leave the tub for reasons determined by your midwife. These might include elevated temperature, changes in the baby's heart rate, bleeding, a need for an episiotomy, excessive contamination of the water and/or difficult labor. Other complications not listed here might arise and necessitate leaving the tub. After birth the baby may remain on your chest or your baby's condition may require that his/her cord be clamped and cut to facilitate resuscitation efforts.

_____ I have been given an opportunity to fully discuss and understand the risks and benefits of underwater birth compared to other means of childbirth.

_____ I am aware that the practice of midwifery carries no guarantees regarding the outcome of underwater birth of my baby.

_____ I understand that I may be asked to leave the tub, and I agree to exit if requested

_____ I understand I may need to lift myself from the water for examinations, listening to the baby, delivery of the placenta and any emergency.

_____ I understand that I must read and sign this document to participate in a waterbirth or use hydrotherapy in labor.

_____ I have read and fully understand the provided information. All of my questions have been answered by my midwife to my satisfaction. I understand that approval of my plan to attempt a waterbirth is based on information available as of this date and may require change as my pregnancy or labor progresses.

Client Printed Name/ Signature/ Date