



York Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Use of the birthing pool for labour and birth

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## **Maternity Services**

York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

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① For more information, please contact your own midwife

# Introduction

The use of water for labour and birth is now a well-established option for healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies.

## Who can use the pool?

To use the pool:

- You must be between 37+0 and 41+6 weeks pregnant
- Your pregnancy must have been trouble free
- Be pregnant with only one baby
- Your baby must be in a head down position
- If your waters (membranes) have broken the fluid must be clear
- On admission to the Labour Ward your temperature, pulse and blood pressure need to be normal
- Before you can enter the pool, your baby's heartbeat must be satisfactory. This will be assessed by listening to the heartbeat with a hand-held Doppler
- Your labour should be established
- If you have had a previous caesarean section (VBAC), you can use the pool but we will need to continually monitor the health of your baby using a wireless monitor (known as telemetry).

# Who cannot use the pool?

You cannot use the pool if you have or are:

- Insulin Dependent Diabetic and in induced labour
- Epileptic
- Hepatitis
- HIV
- Skin Conditions
- Expecting twins
- If your baby is in the breech position, bottom down
- If you have had two previous caesarean sections
- If you have had four or more babies
- Previous complicated labour such as difficulty in delivering the baby's shoulder.
- Have a history of antenatal bleeding
- Raised blood pressure
- Small baby
- It is more than 24 hours since your waters broke
- History of previous of large blood loss (haemorrhage) following delivery
- If you have had certain drugs for pain relief up to three hours prior to entering the pool.

There is no maternal weight limit for using the pool but consideration should be given regarding the safety of mum and baby. The midwife must be able to listen to the baby heartbeat and view the progress throughout labour. In an emergency, you and/or your baby may need to be evacuated from the pool and you must be able to get out of the pool unaided.

## **You may leave the birthing pool at any time**

### **You may be asked to leave the pool if:**

- The baby's waters (liquor) becomes green (meconium) stained
- You develop a temperature
- Hearing your baby's heartbeat becomes difficult or the heartbeat becomes irregular
- You ask for further pain relief either by injection or an epidural
- Your labour is not progressing
- You have a fresh blood loss
- You need to deliver the after-birth (placenta)

Someone must be with you at all times while you are in the pool, for example a midwife or birth partner.

## **What are the benefits of using the birthing pool?**

- Good pain relief
- A relaxing and peaceful atmosphere
- Can speed up the first stage of labour
- Reduce the need for any other pain relief
- The support provided by the water allows you to have more mobility and freedom
- Decrease the risk of other interventions

## **What are the risks of using the birthing pool?**

- By using the birthing pool the midwife may have difficulty in observing your baby as it is being born
- There may be difficulty in estimating any blood loss

## **What do I need to bring into hospital with me if I am going to use the birthing pool?**

- To help you keep the pool water as clear as possible you will need to bring a sieve.
- You may wish to bring something to wear in the birthing pool, for example a t-shirt, nightshirt, tankini top or a sports bra.
- You can bring in a floating aid such as a swimming noodle to provide more comfort.

## **Where can I get further information from?**

- National Institute of Clinical Excellence (2014) Intrapartum Care. Care of Healthy Women and their babies during childbirth. NHS. London.
- [www.midwifeinfo.com](http://www.midwifeinfo.com)
- Google “Waterbirths”
- Royal College of Midwives (RCM) website [www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk). immersion in water for labour and birth 2012.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:  
Maternity Services Patient Information Group,  
c/o Patient Leaflet Team, Healthcare Governance, 98  
Union Terrace, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York,  
YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721045 or 725230 or email  
us at [patient.information2@york.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information2@york.nhs.uk).

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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