

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

You can wear whatever you feel most comfortable in. Some women prefer to be naked when they give birth in water as it gives you freedom to move around without clothing getting in the way and you can have immediate skin to skin contact with your baby when it is born. Others wear a cropped top, bikini top or t shirt. It is important that you feel relaxed and comfortable no matter what, so what you wear is entirely up to you. You may find it useful to bring a towelling dressing gown to wear to keep you warm when you are out of the pool.

Reference - Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists/Royal College of Midwives (2006) Joint Statement Immersion in Water During Labour and Birth.

If you can't go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

We are happy to consider requests for this publication in other languages or formats such as large print. Please call [01324 590886](tel:01324 590886) (24hrs), fax [01324 590867](tel:01324 590867) or email disability.department@nhs.net

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This includes corridors, doorways, car parks and any of our grounds. If you do smoke on NHS premises you may be liable to prosecution and a fine.



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Water Birth

Patient Information Leaflet

At FVRH we are pleased to offer you the opportunity to use a birthing pool for your labour and birth. We have two birthing pools in the labour ward, which are available for use, although they may not always be available if they are already in use. We would like to support as many women as possible achieve a straight forward birth. We know that the more relaxed, secure and in control that you feel the more able you are to move freely and more likely that you will achieve a more straight forward birth. For some women birthing pools offer all these benefits.

Please talk to your team midwife or document your wishes in your birth plan if you are interested in using water for your labour and/or birth. She will be able to give you more information and answer any further questions you and your birthing partner may have.

We have compiled this information leaflet to give you and your birth partner some information about labouring and/or birthing your baby in water.

LABOURING IN WATER

There are many benefits for using the water for your labour. This includes less painful contractions, making it less likely that you will need a pain relieving injection or request an epidural, a shorter labour and less need for the drug (oxytocin) to help make your contractions more effective. (RCOG/RCM 2006).

BIRTH IN WATER

Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence from research trials to tell us all we want to know about birth in water (RCOG/RCM 2006). However, there is a rare, but real risk for babies born under water including: the risk of drowning, the cord rupturing (splitting apart) and infection.

CAN I HAVE A WATERBIRTH?

Generally, if you are healthy and between 37 and 42 weeks pregnant and have had an uncomplicated pregnancy with no serious medical illnesses or complications and if your BMI was less than 35 when you met your midwife for your first appointment and where applicable, your previous pregnancy and labour were normal then a water birth could be suitable for you.

SAFETY

Your midwife will try to create a calm, unhurried relaxed environment, encourage you as necessary and disturb you as little as possible. She will however check your baby's heartbeat and your blood pressure, temperature and heart rate regularly. We recommend that the water temperature is observed and regulated carefully when you are in labour and birthing your baby. Water temperature should not exceed 37.5°C. We also encourage you to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and hyperthermia in the warm environment.

WHEN SHOULD I GO INTO THE WATER?

There is limited evidence about when is the best time to enter the pool. However we do recommend labour should be established prior entering the water. Every woman wishing to enter the pool will be assessed on an individual basis.

PAIN RELIEF

You can use gas and air (entonox) while you are in the pool. However if you request an injection of diamorphine or an epidural you will need to leave the pool. If you have the diamorphine injection, 2 hours or possibly longer should lapse before you re enter the pool. This is dependent on your individual reaction to the injection.

THE BIRTH

As the birth approaches you will know whether you wish to birth in the water, some women prefer to birth their baby out of the water. Your baby will be allowed to birth with no-one touching and you will be supported with verbal guidance from your midwife to ensure your baby is not stimulated to breathe before reaching the water's surface. The midwife will gently raise your baby to the surface head first, your baby will start to breathe and must not be placed back into the water, the baby can then be placed close to your abdomen. You may notice that your baby is a blue colour, has its eyes open and is very calm.

THE THIRD STAGE (PLACENTA)

You can choose from two options:

- The first is to have active management which would mean you have the syntometrine injection (which helps your placenta to deliver), if you choose this option then your midwife would ask you to leave the pool
- The second option is the physiological management – allowing you to remain in the water for delivery of the placenta providing there is no excessive bleeding or delay in the placenta delivering.

More research is needed about the risks and benefits of having the 3rd stage of labour under water (RCOG/RCM 2006).

REASONS FOR LEAVING THE POOL

You may choose to get out of the pool at any point during your labour. If your midwife had any concerns about either you or your baby you would be informed of the reason and asked to leave the pool. Here are the reasons that your midwife would ask you to leave the pool.

- To use the toilet
- For internal vaginal examinations to assess progress in labour
- If there is any difficulty hearing the baby's heart rate or any irregularity in the baby's heart rate
- If your blood pressure, temperature or pulse rate becomes abnormal
- If your midwife is concerned about you or your baby's condition
- Extra pain relief (injections or epidural)
- If the labour is not progressing as expected

You may choose to get out of the pool at any point in your labour. If your midwife has any concerns about either you or your baby you will be informed of the reason and asked to leave the pool immediately.