


The Birthing Pool



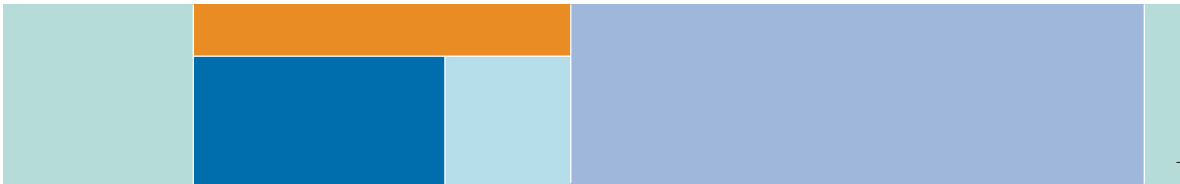
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This leaflet is designed to provide women and their partners with information about the use of water during labour.

Many people find that lying in a deep bath of warm water is beneficial to both mind and body. For example how many of us resort to “a soak in the bath” at the end of a stressful day? The warmth of the water can help to reduce muscle spasm and tension and can contribute to a feeling of wellbeing. Many women enjoy a bath during pregnancy as it can help relieve minor discomforts such as backache. Using the pool can bring similar benefits during labour.

In the pool room at each hospital there is a large deep bath, which can contain enough water to allow freedom of movement. There are many advantages to using the pool and the following list is just a few of the many ways that it has helped women in the past.

- A more comfortable labour in an unrestricted environment
 - A reduction in the need for other strong pain relief
 - A feeling of being more in control of your body
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- There is less likelihood of you needing an episiotomy (a cut in the skin between the vagina and the anus, which is sometimes needed in order to make the opening of the vagina bigger)
- A calm unhurried birth of the baby aided by the counter-pressure of the water
- A relaxed warm baby guided straight into the arms of its mother



City Campus pool



Queen's Campus pool

Labouring in the pool

Who can use the pool?

The pool is usually offered to women who are over 37 weeks pregnant and expecting a single baby. It is only possible to use the pool if the baby is lying with its head down (cephalic presentation). Any women who have had no problems either in this pregnancy, or a previous pregnancy, may be able to use the pool. When you arrive on the labour suite your midwife will help you to decide if it is right for you and your baby.



Do I need to book the pool?


As you do not know exactly when your labour will start it would be impossible to book the pool in advance. However if you are giving birth to your baby at home you can hire a rigid-sided pool, or buy an inflatable pool, for use at home.


What if the pool is already in use?

Although there is only one pool at each unit, it is unusual for more than one woman at a time to wish to use it. However if it is already in use when you arrive, you may wish to use other facilities such as the bath, or one of the showers in order for you to relax. If your labour is more advanced you may wish to try other forms of pain relief such as gas and air, pethidine or diamorphine until the pool is available. If pethidine or diamorphine is used it is necessary to wait 3 hours before using the pool as the drug can cause drowsiness.

How can the birth partner help?

Your main role is to support the labouring mother; physically and mentally helping her to feel relaxed and cared for. You could help by assisting her to change position offering her drinks frequently and use a facecloth rinsed in cool water to keep her cool. You can get into the pool if you wish wearing suitable clothing of course! If you have decided that you





would like to use the pool you and your partner may wish to complete a birth plan. This will ensure that your needs are fully understood.

What do I wear in the pool?

This is entirely personal. You can either be naked, as if going for a bath, or wear a t-shirt or cropped top.

At what point do I enter the pool?

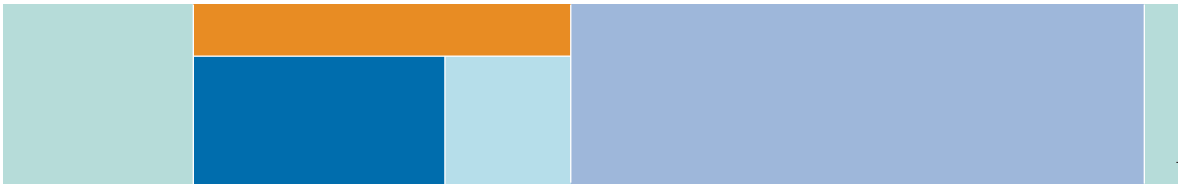
If you are using the pool as a method of pain relief you can use it at any time. There is some evidence to show that labour slows down in the pool, due to relaxation and release of tension. Therefore it is recommended that you enter the pool only when your labour is advancing well.


How warm is the water?

The water temperature is usually between 34-37°C during the first stage and you can regulate it to suit your comfort throughout this stage. For your baby's birth, the water needs to be around 37°C.

Can I put anything in the water?

At present there is not enough evidence to say whether the addition of any substance would be entirely safe. Women





who wish to use aromatherapy oils during labour are advised how to use them by the midwives on labour suite, some oils can be added to the water or inhaled from a handkerchief, taper or piece of cotton wool or aroma stone. (Naked flames such as candles are not allowed because of their fire risk.)

What if I need additional pain relief?


Entonox (Gas and air) is also available in the poolrooms for you to use. If this does not provide enough pain relief for you the midwife may advise you to return to the main part of the labour suite for other pain relief such as Pethidine / Diamorphine or an epidural. There is a leaflet, 'Positive ways to manage pain in labour' which you may find helpful.


How is my baby's heart rate going to be monitored?

We have a hand-held battery operated ultrasonic heart rate monitor, which can be safely used while you are in the water. It can be used intermittently to assess the wellbeing of your baby.

What if the midwife becomes concerned about the labour?

The midwife will assist you in your aim to labour in the pool. However, it is vital that you understand that her role also includes careful observation of the health of both you and your baby. If the midwife thinks either you or your baby is





not coping well with the labour, please be guided by her. She will give you every opportunity to understand her concerns and to discuss what is happening with you. You will only be advised to leave the pool by a midwife or doctor if the condition of you and your baby is causing concern.

Giving birth in the pool

Can I give birth to my baby in the water?

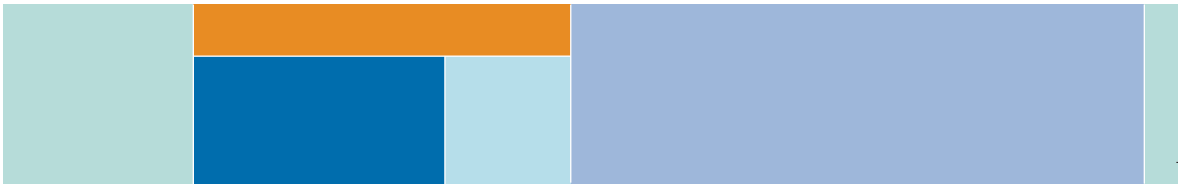
Yes you can, although many women prefer to use the pool for pain relief in the 1st stage of labour and then leave the pool for the birth of their baby.

Can I still use the pool if my waters are broken?

Yes, but only if the baby hasn't had its bowels open (passed meconium) and all is well with the labour so far. If the baby does have its bowels open it may mean it is not coping with the stress of labour and would require closer monitoring out of the pool.

Is there any risk of infection?

Evidence shows that the risk of getting an infection by using water for pain relief is minimal.





What happens if I need an episiotomy?


There is evidence to show that you are less likely to need an episiotomy (a cut) if using water for pain relief. If an episiotomy is needed it may be performed in or out of the water.

Will the baby breathe while it is under the water and how long does the baby remain under the water after birth?

This is a very common concern for women who want to give birth to their babies in water. To make sure the baby does not attempt to breathe underwater they are brought to the surface immediately and his head will be kept out of the water at all times.

How is the placenta (afterbirth) delivered?

After your baby is born you will be helped by your midwife to leave the pool and deliver the placenta either on a bed or on a mat on the floor. This can be done with or without the aid of an injection of an oxytocic drug.



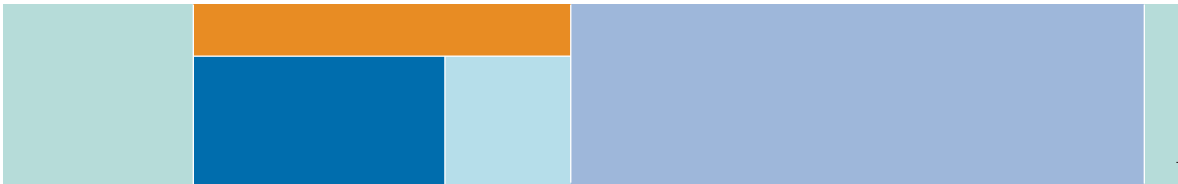



When labour starts

Telephone the labour suite to let them know you are coming in and that you would like to use the pool if it is free. The numbers are on the back of this leaflet. When you arrive on the labour suite a midwife will meet you. She will ask you some questions and look at your notes. She will palpate your abdomen (examine your tummy to feel the position of your baby), and she may do an internal examination to help you decide when to get into the pool.


If your pregnancy is straightforward and no problems have been identified when you arrive, then the pool can be used. The pool will take approximately 20-30 mins to fill. When it is ready you may enter whenever you wish in order to obtain the benefits of the soothing waters. You may like to try different positions to maintain your comfort and get in and out of the water, as you desire.

The object of using the pool is to make the birthing experience pleasant and joyful. If it is not possible for you to use the pool as planned then the midwife will carefully explain the reasons to you.





Do remember that nothing is 100% successful. Although the majority of women enjoy using the pool, being in the water does not suit everybody. A small percentage of women find that being in the water does not fulfil their expectations or help them to manage the contraction pains. If this is your experience then please don't feel you have failed in any way. It is only possible to know if something is right for you if you try it first!



Further Information

The information in this leaflet is gained from guidelines which midwives and doctors use all the time. They are from local and national guidelines, and are produced from research. Your midwife or doctor can give you more information should you require it.

<http://nuh.nhs.uk>

<http://nice.org.uk>

Positive ways to manage pain in labour (NUH leaflet)

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