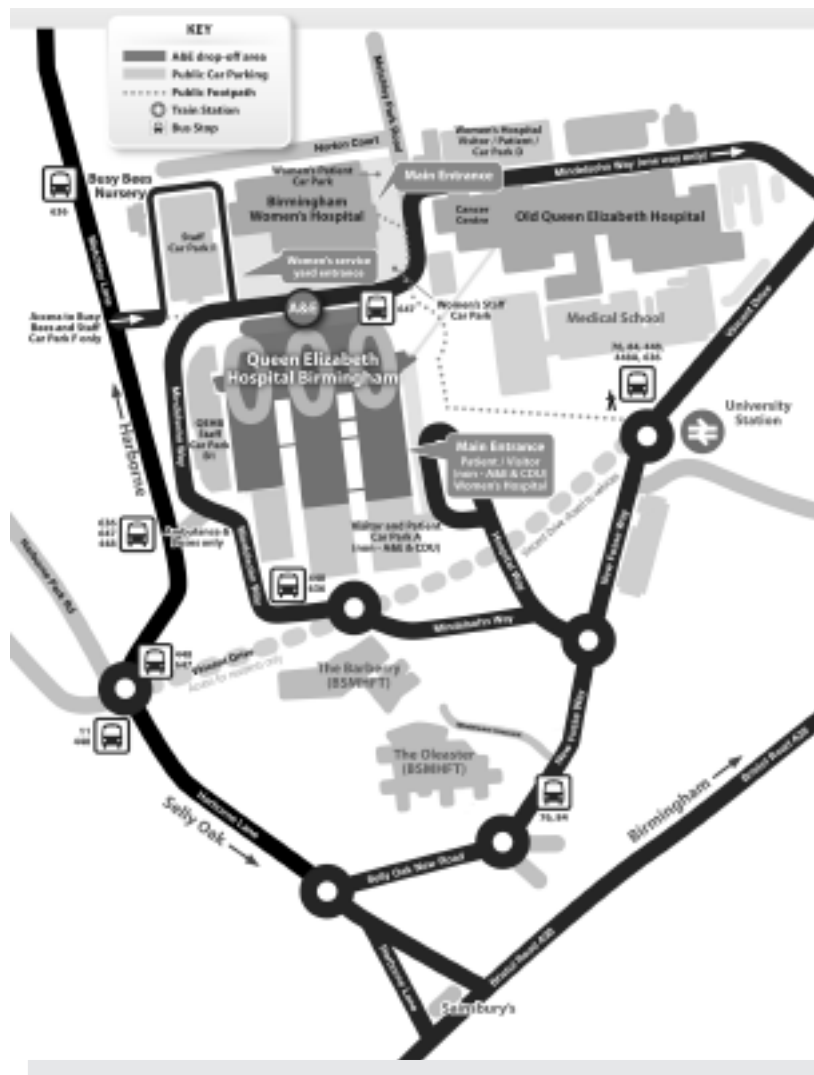


Water Birth



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For further information visit the
Birmingham Women's NHS Foundation Trust Website
www.bwhct.nhs.uk

Birmingham Women's **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TG
Telephone: 0121 472 1377 Fax: 0121 627 2602

**Using water for pain relief
in labour and birth**

Introduction

Women describe warm water as a wonderful comfort during labour. Water assists you to move around more easily than on dry land. Moving into comfortable positions can reduce the pain of labour, which in turn can help your labour to progress. Some women then choose to give birth to their baby in the water. Water is one of the many forms of pain relief available to you. It is a good idea to find out about all forms of pain relief in case your needs change on the day, or the pool is unavailable.

We are able to provide the pool as an option for women without complications and for women who we anticipate will have a normal labour and birth.

What happens when my labour starts?

Contact for advice either:

- Your community midwife for your homebirth: **07970 445190**
- The birth centre: **0121 623 6907/8**
- Delivery Suite: **0121 472 3032**

It is a good idea to let us know, when you ring in labour, that you wish to use the pool.

Early labour at home

Don't forget to use the bath at home during early labour. The warm water will help you to relax (don't have the water too hot because this might be harmful). Try to remain in the bath for about an hour or so at a time so that you get the full benefit. Also consider using a TENS unit after your bath.

If you are going to have a home birth, it is advisable not to enter your birth pool until your community midwife arrives as the water may accelerate your labour.

Birmingham Women's NHS Foundation Trust is committed to involving women in the development of our services.

We would appreciate your comments regarding this information leaflet.

YOU MAY RESPOND EITHER BY:

Writing to:

Patients Advice and Information Centre
Birmingham Women's NHS Foundation Trust
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B13 8QH

Telephone:

0121 627 2747

E-mail:

helen.oxton@bwhct.nhs.uk

Preparation for home waterbirth

Please discuss with your midwife where you may wish to place the pool at home, with regard to the following:

- Location of electrical sockets and equipment
- Whether the floor can bear the load of a full pool
- Providing adequate space around the pool
- Providing covering for the floor

Should you have any questions that are not covered
here ask your community midwife

Delivery Suite on 0121 472 3032

or

Birth Centre on 0121 623 6907

Further information can be found on our developing website:

www.bwhct.nhs.uk

also

www.sheilakitinger.com/Waterbirth.htm

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The Pool for established labour

We usually recommend getting into the pool when labour is well established. This is because if you get into the pool too soon, labour can sometimes slow down. If a vaginal examination is done, your cervix would ideally be at least 5cm dilated. The pool takes about 20 minutes to fill.

The water will be maintained at a comfortable temperature for you. We will observe you and your baby's wellbeing during the time you are in the pool, as we would if you were on dry land. Your baby's heartbeat will be listened to every 15 minutes with a waterproof sonic aid during your first stage of labour and more often during the second or pushing stage of labour. You may be asked to float so that we can reach your tummy easily to hear your baby.

A vaginal examination may be necessary to ensure labour is progressing normally. How often will be decided between you and the midwife caring for you for this. You may wish to get out of the water and back in again. It is entirely your choice. The midwife may encourage you to leave the pool sometimes to walk around if you have been in the pool for a long period of time. This can help labour to progress normally.

You can use "Entonox" (gas and air) whilst in the water. We do not encourage Pethidine if you are considering using the pool. However, if you have had Pethidine, use the pool for labour but we suggest getting out for the birth because Pethidine can make your baby sleepy.

We do not recommend that you use aromatherapy oils in the pool and that oil is washed off your skin first.

If for any reason the midwife has any concerns about you or your baby, you will be asked to leave the water. You may then be offered a trace of your baby's heart rate.

Who will look after me?

A midwife will be with you throughout your labour once it is established and birth itself. If you choose to give birth into the water then a 2nd person will be present for the birth. We may ask you if a student midwife can be present.

Can my partner get into the pool?

Providing s/he wears swimwear. Your movement may be reduced, but the choice is yours. Whilst in the pool most women do not wear clothing, some women wear a top; it is your choice.

The Birth (if under water)

You will know when it is time to push and your midwife will support and encourage your instincts to push. Providing the water is deep enough for the baby's head to be born underwater, you will be able to get into any position that is comfortable for you.

The baby's head is born and the body follows, usually with the next contraction. At this point you or your partner will be encouraged to help lift your baby gently out of the water.

My Baby

Whilst under the water your baby will not breathe and may look quite pale/blue. Don't worry, s/he will still be getting oxygen through your afterbirth (placenta).

Babies are often born with their eyes open and are often much quieter than if born on dry land. Don't be surprised if s/he does not cry immediately.

The Afterbirth (Placenta)

The midwife will discuss the delivery of your placenta with you.

Shortly after the birth of your baby you will be asked to get out of the pool and onto either a mattress on the floor or onto a bed. The afterbirth is usually out within about 30 minutes.

You may feel cold afterwards and you will be wrapped in towels. Baby can be wrapped up with you during this time for a cuddle. You may like to bring a towelling dressing gown to hospital with you.

Will I need stitching?

The warm water is thought to help increase the stretching of your muscles in the perineum and reduce your chance of tearing. However, should you need to be stitched, it will be done shortly after your birth whilst you are on the bed.

Are there any risks?

There are risks with all births but we work hard to minimise them at all times.

Research has shown there should be no problems with underwater births providing our guidelines are followed carefully.

The midwife will aim to provide a positive birth experience for both you and your partner. Your co-operation with any advice will be for your and your baby's safety. If an emergency arises you will be advised to leave the water as quickly as possible.

Who may be excluded from using the pool?

Being booked under midwifery led care suggests that you will have a straightforward pregnancy and birth, and therefore could consider using the pool. However, please ask (ideally in advance of labour starting) if you are booked under the care of an obstetrician and you are keen to try the pool.

It is not advisable for you to use the pool if :

- You are clinically unsuitable and it is considered unsafe.
- It is recommended that your baby requires continuous fetal heart rate monitoring in labour.
- You are unable to get in and out of the bath yourself. The midwife will NOT be able to lift you (we do have an emergency procedure in the event of collapse).
- The pool is in use. It cannot be booked in advance and is used on a "first come first served basis".
- Staffing levels or workload affect the safe use of the pool.

There may be times when we suggest that you use the pool for labour but not for the birth. If water for labour appeals to you, ask your midwife to discuss your options with you.