

Use of water immersion during labour and birth

The use of water immersion during labour and birth provides an additional option for comfort. Benefits of water immersion include.

- pain relief
- reduced need for pain medication
- relaxation
- more freedom to move

Who can use the bath in labour?

Safety is important for both mother and baby. At Royal North Shore and Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Hospitals water immersion in labour and birth is offered to women in the following circumstances.

- More than 37 weeks pregnant with one baby
- No medical concern such as high blood pressure
- Woman able to get in and out of the bath without assistance
- Baby's heartbeat is normal & there are no concerns for baby's health

We recommend you have a discussion with your midwife or doctor about water immersion during pregnancy to see if it is a suitable option for you.

What is the recommended water temperature?

- It is important that you do not overheat so your midwife will check your temperature and the water temperature regularly. We recommend the water be no warmer than 37.5 degrees
- You are encouraged to drink fluids regularly to avoid dehydration.

When can I get into the bath?

- When you are at home, you can use the bath at any time
- The recommended time to get in the bath is when you are in established labour
- The bath must be free of oils, soaps, salts, and lotions
- When you are in the bath, a midwife or your partner must be with you at all times

When should I get out of the bath?

- If your temperature is higher than 37.5 degrees
- At least every two hours to pass urine
- If the midwife or doctor has concerns about you or your baby's wellbeing
- If a midwife or your birthing support or partner is not able to be with you

Can I have pain relief in the bath?

- You can use nitrous oxide
- Women who have had an epidural or morphine are unable to use the bath

Birthing in the water

The stimulus for a baby to breathe is touch, light, sound, and temperature. Your midwife will ensure the water is deep enough for you to keep your bottom underwater during the birth so that your baby is born completely under water and then brought up gently to the surface.

After the birth

- If you are having the oxytocin injection for the placenta, you will need to get out of the bath.
- If you are having physiological third stage (no oxytocin injection) you may remain in the bath however the water will be drained.

If you have any questions or would like to read our guidelines for the use of water immersion during labour and birth, please talk to your midwife or doctor.