

## Water Birth Consent

Water birth is the process of delivering your baby in a tub of warm water. Water birth is supported by the leading midwifery organizations in the United States such as the American College of Nurse Midwives and the American Association of Birth Centers. The American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics both state that water birth should be conducted only in the context of research trials. We follow the guidelines set forward by the American College of Nurse Midwives and the American Association of Birth Centers for offering water birth.

Mostly all women laboring without medication can use jacuzzi tubs during their active labor process. However, water birth for pushing and delivery of the baby is an appropriate option when we screen for preexisting complications or risk factors. Some factors that exclude water birth as an option are:

- Chronic hypertension or gestational hypertension
- Gestational diabetes (or unknown status)
- Velamentous or unseen umbilical cord insertion on ultrasound
- Inconsistent prenatal care
- Non-reassuring fetal heart tones in labor
- Heavy-moderate meconium staining of the amniotic fluid (more than trace)
- Use of Pitocin in labor
- Fever, infection or abnormal bleeding in labor
- VBAC
- Preterm labor

### Benefits of laboring in water

- Enhanced maternal relaxation and endorphin release
- Lower stress hormone levels
- Lower blood pressure and improved blood flow throughout body
- Increased satisfaction and sense of control with birth experience

### Possible benefits of birthing in water

- Possible shorter pushing stage (needs more research)
- Lower episiotomy rates in literature. Conflicting research and theory on the impact of water birth on the incidence of naturally occurring perineal tearing

### Safety concerns with birthing in water

- We need to be carefully bringing your baby up out of the water immediately after birth, and not putting the head back into the water. Healthy babies are triggered to breathe the first time they experience air. There have been case studies of infants breathing, swallowing or drowning in water during water birth.
- We take care when bringing the baby to your chest that the umbilical cord is long enough to allow for this, you may need to change positions if the cord is short.
- We make sure that the tub and water are clean to avoid infection. If the tub becomes grossly soiled in labor then we will get out of the tub.
- We make sure that the water in the tub is at an appropriate temperature so you and your baby do not overheat or get too cold.
- If your labor slows down when you are in the tub, we will encourage you to walk or do alternate positions, and then get back into the tub when your labor pattern is better established.
- If complications arise during labor and birth, we will help you get out of the tub.

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**For additional/more extensive overviews of the evidence on water birth please see:**

Evidence Based Birth - <https://evidencebasedbirth.com/waterbirth/>

OHSU Center for Women's Health - <https://www.ohsu.edu/womens-health/water-birth>

**For professional organizational statements on water birth please see:**

American College of Nurse Midwives

<https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000004048/Hydrotherapy-During-Labor-and-Birth-April-2014.pdf>

American Association of Birth Centers

<https://waterbirth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AABC-waterbirth-statement.pdf>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2016/11/immersion-in-water-during-labor-and-delivery> (ACOG statement also endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics)

American College of Nurse Midwives - response to ACOG statement

<https://www.midwife.org/ACNM-Water-Birth-Statement>

### CONSENT:

I/We have read the above pages and understand and agree to our responsibilities. I/We understand that if unexpected complications arise, plans for Waterbirth may need to be abandoned in order to assure the best outcome for me and my baby. I/We understand that I/We should not sign this consent if all issues and questions have not been explained to our satisfaction.

Southwest midwives attend water births at Mercy Regional Medical Center. All rooms have options for hydrotherapy. However, there is only one room with a tub for water birth. Ability to have a water birth also depends on the availability of that room.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Midwife \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_