

USE OF WATER IMMERSION FOR LABOUR AND BIRTH

Information for women and their families

The use of water immersion during labour and birth may provide you with an additional option for comfort, mobility and privacy. When choosing to have your baby at any CCLHD hospital, the option to use water for your labour and birth is available.

There is evidence that suggests when water immersion is used in low risk labour and birth there is:

- Less use of drugs for pain relief, especially epidural blocks
- Lower levels of perceived pain and an increase in relaxation
- Fewer medical interventions for slow progress in the first stage of labour
- A decrease in the rate of episiotomies attended
- A greater sense of control in labour and increased satisfaction during pushing
- No increase in infection rates for mothers and babies
- No difference in Apgar scores for babies at birth

It is thought that water birth is a more gentle way of bringing a baby into the world while offering you a more comfortable way of birthing. During your labour or birth you may choose to leave the bath if you feel uncomfortable for any reason. There may be occasions where your midwife may request that you leave the water. This may be if there are any concerns about you or your baby's wellbeing.

Your midwife/ doctor will encourage you to keep drinking fluids while in the bath to avoid dehydration. The bath water temperature will

be monitored for your comfort and that of your baby at birth.

Your partner may wish to enter the bath to support you. If so, they are required to wear appropriate swim wear.

If you choose to birth in water it is important that your baby is born completely under the water so that it does not take a premature breath. Your baby will then be brought gently to the surface to take its first breath. Your baby may then remain in the bath with you ensuring that his or her head remains above the water.

If you would like further information about labour and birth in water the following resources may assist you:

The following resources that offer more information:

Website: www.waterbirth.org

Books:

- The Waterbirth Book. J Balakas UK 2004
- Waterbirth: an attitude to care. D Galand. Pub: BFM Books for midwives 2002
- Gentle birth choices. B Harper. Healing Art Press 1994.

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.