



Water Immersion and/or Waterbirth:

Making an Informed Choice for
You and your Baby



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital

Welcome to Kingston Health Sciences Centre's Kingston General Hospital site and congratulations on the upcoming addition to your family. We feel privileged to share this special time with you and we're here to provide you with the care and support that fit with your unique wishes.

As you prepare for the upcoming birth of your new child, there will be many decisions for you and your partner to make. These choices include whether you would like to take advantage of water immersion and/or waterbirth during your delivery. This pamphlet will provide you all the important information you'll need to help make this decision.

The Benefits of Water

- Being immersed in warm water may make you feel more comfortable and relaxed which may reduce anxiety and stress.
- The buoyancy of the water allows you to move and change positions more easily.
- Water immersion during the first stage of labour has been shown to decrease the need for pain relieving drugs and may also decrease the length of your labour.

Exploring Your choices

- Talk to your midwife and/or doctor to find out more information about:
- Any reasons why immersion in water may not be suitable for you
- The benefits and risks to you and your baby
- Reasons why you would be required to exit the tub
- You will be asked to provide consent prior to entering the tub.

Concerns associated with labour and/or birth in water

Unexpected Emergency

If there is an emergency during your labour we will ask you to exit the tub. If you need assistance, your support person and/or care provider can help.

Overheating

If you become too hot while you are in the tub, your baby may also be too hot. Your temperature, as well as the temperature of the water will be monitored regularly to prevent overheating. If you develop a high temperature, your healthcare provider will ask you to exit the tub until it returns to normal.

Water inhalation

If you deliver in the tub, your baby should be born under the water, then gently but promptly lifted out into the air, and placed against your skin on your chest. Your baby's head must then be kept above the water so breathing can start and the potential

inhalation of water can be avoided. If your baby needs help breathing he/she must be removed from the water immediately.

Cord Tearing

On rare occasions (2.4 patients per-one thousand), your baby's cord could tear, causing blood loss until the cord is clamped. This can happen during deliveries in or out of water, but may be more common for in water deliveries. To help lessen the risk we will work with you to ensure not too much strain is put on the cord when your baby is brought out of the water.

Infection Control

We put strict guidelines in place to keep the water as clean as possible, and to minimize the possibility of infection.

Who can use water for labour and/or birth

You are eligible to use the tub if:

- You are healthy with no medical or pregnancy complications
- You are having only one baby who is presenting head down
- You are between **37-42** weeks pregnant
- Your baby has a normal fetal heart rate
- You are able to walk/move independently

You are not eligible to use the tub if:

- You have a communicable blood or skin infection (i.e. HIV, Hepatitis, herpes lesions)
- You have a fever
- Your baby has an abnormal fetal heart rate
- *Requires constant fetal monitoring (possible contraindication)*
- You have meconium stained amniotic fluid
- You have excessive vaginal bleeding
- You weigh more than 300 lbs (due to weight bearing load of tub edge)
- You have had narcotics within four hours
- You have an epidural in place (**You may use Nitronox [air and gas] for pain relief while in the tub**)

Conditions for using water during your labour/birth

- You must be cared for by a physician/ midwife that is trained and comfortable with waterbirth if you are wishing to deliver your baby in the tub.

- You must always be accompanied while in the tub and your support person(s) must remain outside of the tub.
- The tub must only be filled with tap water (no additives such as bath oils, gels, soaps or salts.)
- When immersed, the water should cover your belly.
- If you feel too hot or too cold, the temperature of the water can be adjusted by your healthcare provider, or you may leave the tub at any time.
- You must leave the tub to empty your bladder (about every 2 hours)
- Sip on water to avoid dehydration in labour (at least 500mL per hour)
- You must leave the tub when advised to do so by your healthcare provider (i.e. If there are safety concerns)
- Please openly communicate with staff to ensure your needs are being met
- *Please do not wear jewelry or clothes with metal clasps in the tub*

What else should I know?

- There are currently two permanent tubs for water immersion and/or birth at KHSC –KGH site
- Tubs cannot be reserved in advance, and are offered on a first come, first served basis
- There is a **\$10** fee for disposable products that are used in the tub. Please bring exact change.

Contact:

Women & Children's Programs
Kingston Health Sciences Centre
76 Stuart Street
Kingston, ON K7L 2V7
Phone (613) 549-6666 ext. 2315
Website www.kgh.on.ca

Resources:

www.pregnancyinfo.ca
www.kingstonmidwives.ca
www.thecochranelibrary.com

Kingston Health

Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston