

~~ 4B MATERNITY UNIT ~~

WATER IMMERSION IN LABOUR / WATER BIRTH

~ CONSENT FORM INFORMATION SHEET ~

1. **Benefits for immersion during first stage:**
 - Pain relief and comfort.
 - Relaxation.
 - Baby not affected by narcotics.
2. **Reasons why you may not be able to use the bath in first stage include:**
 - Epidural analgesia, persisting influence of narcotic (Pethidine).
 - Meconium staining of liquor.
 - Syntocinon infusion.
 - Baby requires continuous monitoring.
 - No credentialed staff available.
 - Woman weighs more than 100kg.
3. **You will be asked to leave the bath for the following reasons:**
 - If your temperature goes above 37.5°C.
 - Bleeding.
 - Meconium liquor.
 - Baby becomes distressed.
 - Request for narcotic / epidural pain relief.
 - Your blood pressure becomes elevated.
 - Abnormal labour pattern or poor uterine action.
 - Any other reasons for the midwife to be concerned about your or your baby's welfare.
4. **Preconditions for the use of water immersion in labour:**
 - It is a condition for immersion in water during labour that your pregnancy is uncomplicated and you are capable of standing, entering or leaving the water unaided.
 - You need to inform the staff if you have any infectious condition such as Hepatitis, Herpes, etc.
 - Water immersion too early in labour or prolonged water immersion may impede progress of the labour or prevent establishment of active labour. It is therefore preferable that women be in established labour before using water immersion.
 - In the event of a water birth, the baby should be born completely under water, with no air contact, and raised to the surface as soon as possible after birth – otherwise the baby is born completely out of the water.
 - You will be asked to leave the bath for delivery of the placenta.
 - You agree to leave the bath if requested to do so by the midwife / doctor.
5. **Possible risks and complications to mother and baby:**

Water immersion in labour should be used with care. Although no significant adverse outcomes have been reported in the research to day, the possibility of adverse outcomes for the baby have not been completely ruled out. These include:-

 - Baby aspirating water 1:2000.
 - Baby's cord snapping 1:8000.
 - Slight risk of infection for both mother and baby.
6. **Finally:**

Whilst water immersion in labour is growing in popularity, there is still disagreement amongst professionals as to the advantages / disadvantages of using water for labour and birth. Although there is no conclusive proof that water improves outcomes of labour, there does seem to be a growing consensus that water immersion during labour should remain a choice for pregnant women.

- Gilbert R E & Tookey P A (1999) : *Perinatal mortality and morbidity among babies delivered in water : Surveillance study and postal survey.* BMJ, 319 : 483-7.
- Sunshine Coast Health Services District – Maternity Services.

May 2008