

The High River Hospital is pleased to provide select patients with the opportunity to labour and give birth in water. We have large birth tubs in three of our birthing rooms. The tub is quite spacious and can be filled with enough warm water to cover you. After the tub is used, it is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected by our housekeeping staff; this helps to reduce infection.

### Labouring in the tub

During labour, you may use the tub if you meet all of the following criteria:

- Your cervix is thinned out and dilated to 5 or more cm.
- An alternate birth place (such as a bed) is available nearby.
- You have had no pain medications (e.g. morphine or fentanyl) in the last 4 hours and you do not have an epidural in place.
- You have no other risk factors (such as excessive vaginal bleeding, fevers or other signs of infection, active herpes infection, preterm labour, etc.).
- Your routine prenatal blood work shows no signs of infection (such as hepatitis, HIV, etc.).
- Your baby has no risk factors (such as abnormalities in fetal heart rate, passage of meconium, etc.).

### Birth in the tub

Some doctors and all the midwives can perform a water birth when they are on shift. There are some other doctors who are trying to complete their water birth training and they might accompany the midwives. After birth, if you and your baby are healthy, the two of you can stay in the tub as long as both of your heads remain above water. The placenta can be safely delivered in the tub or you may move to the bed to deliver the placenta.

### Advantages of a water birth

- It can be very effective for managing pain and decreases the need for needing pain medications in labour.
- It can lower blood pressure.
- Moving or changing positions is easy.
- It can shorten your labour.

### Disadvantages of a water birth

- Just like any form of pain relief, being immersed in water might not work well for everyone.
- When some patients enter the tub in early labour, contractions may slow or stop.
- It takes time (about 10 minutes) to fill the tub and to make sure the temperature is correct.
- You and your baby may become too hot; this can cause baby's heart rate to go up. We check your temperature often and ensure that the water is not too hot.
- After birth, staff will help bring your baby up to the surface; if the baby goes back under water, he or she can inhale water and serious injury or drowning can occur.
- If the umbilical cord is very short, you may need to lift yourself out of the water to allow your baby to reach the surface of the water to take their first breath.
- Baby's body temperature may get too cool if their whole body is out of the water for too long; we recommended only to keep their head above water.
- You may be asked to get out of the tub for your—or your baby's—safety.

### The process

- Let your healthcare provider know you are interested in labouring and/or birthing in the water during one of your prenatal visits.
- By 32 weeks of pregnancy, read through the resources on the Water Birth International website ([www.waterbirth.org](http://www.waterbirth.org)). Please note that there is other information available on other websites but we cannot guarantee its accuracy.
- Listen to this 33 minute podcast which explains the benefits and risks of water labour and water birth: <https://shefoundhealthmotherhood.libsyn.com/water-birth-and-water-immersion-during-labour>. (It is also pinned on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/HighRiverMaternityClinic>.)
- Have a discussion with our midwives or doctors about your options for water birth; review the advantages and disadvantages and be aware of the requirements to use the tub.
- When you come to the hospital in labour, have a discussion with your healthcare providers to decide if the tub is right for you.
- You will need to sign a consent form which states that you are aware of the benefits and risks.

### Reasons to get out of the tub

If you are asked to get out of the tub, you must do so immediately. We will ask you to get out of the tub if:

- You feel dizzy or you are dehydrated.
- Your temperature is greater than 37.5°C.
- You need to use the bathroom (about every 2 hours).
- Baby's heart rate is abnormal or they are showing other signs of distress.
- An emergency occurs during delivery, such as a shoulder dystocia or if baby's cord is wrapped around their neck.

### Water Birth Consent

By signing this form, I agree that:

- I have reviewed this information with a water birth provider.
- I have reviewed the information provided on the Water Birth International website and the podcast.
- I may not enter the tub until my healthcare provider states that it is safe to do so.
- If, at any point, I am requested to leave the tub for safety reasons, I will do so with assistance.
- I am aware that water labour and birth is dependent on safety issues such as equipment and staffing.
- All of my questions and concerns have been fully addressed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Patient's Signature)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Health provider's name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)