

# Hydrotherapy

at Peterson Regional Medical Center



PETERSON

The Baby Place

# What is Hydrotherapy and how is it used during the labor process?

Hydrotherapy is a part of medicine that has been around since ancient civilizations and used by thousands of people all over the world. It involves the use of water to help relieve pain and treat certain conditions. It works using the physical properties of water such as the temperature and pressure of water to encourage the flow of blood, and lessen the body's sensitivity to pain.

## Benefits of hydrotherapy for labor

- Enables mothers to assume any position which is comfortable for labor.
- Can speed up labor, provide pain relief, promote relaxation, decrease cesarean section rate.
- Give a mother more of a sense of control during the labor process.
- Reduces the need for drugs and interventions during labor.

## What are the potential disadvantages of hydrotherapy during labor?

- Hydrotherapy can decrease contractions if the tub is entered too soon.
- Mom could have elevated body temperature if the water is too warm in the pool. This could cause some distress to your newborn. We will monitor water temp to help prevent this.
- Infants that are actually delivered in the water could have a higher risk of water aspiration, lower body temperature, and an increased risk of jaundice.
- It is difficult to measure actual blood loss of delivery in water.
- Risk of both mother and infant for infections could be increased (This is not supported by evidence).

## Is hydrotherapy an option for you?

- Your baby's heart rate must be within a normal range on admission and remain so throughout should remain so throughout monitoring.
- Your pregnancy must be at least 37 weeks or greater in length.
- Your baby must be in the head down position.
- Your BMI must be <35 at the time of labor.
- You must have a signed consent for use of the tub
- Your healthcare provider must document your education of the guidelines and use of the tub prior to your labor in your record.

## Hydrotherapy is not safe for everyone - here are some reasons you might not be a candidate.

- Attempted vaginal birth after a cesarean section.
- Unexplained fever
- Unstable blood sugars
- Suspected vaginal infection
- Positive HIV
- Anticipated birth complications
- Active genital herpes
- Intrauterine growth restriction of the baby
- Excessive bleeding
- For your safety, you cannot be using pain medication, or receive an epidural while in the tub. Two hours must have passed after receiving pain medication before you can enter/re-enter safely the tub.
- Infusion of magnesium sulfate infusion
- Presence of meconium fluid
- Any fetal heart tracing concerning your health provider or nurse.
- At the discretion of the provider.

### ***Suggestions for how to use the tub:***

- Literature shows entering the tub too early can labor or stop. It is recommended that you do not enter the tub until the start of active labor. Active labor is defined as an established labor pattern, and/or vaginal dilation of 4 cm or greater.
- There is a chemical and hormonal change that takes effect in one's body after approximately twenty minutes after immersion, peaking around 90 minutes.
- It is suggested that you change your environments after about 2 hours of initial immersion. Walking, using the birthing ball or rocking chair could be comfortable options. Getting back into the water after 30 minutes will reactivate the chemical and hormonal process, including a sudden and often marked increase in oxytocin, a labor hormone

## What shall I do if I want to use hydrotherapy during my labor?

Talk to your healthcare provider about our tub. Let your nurse know when you arrive at the hospital that you would like to use hydrotherapy during your labor. Sign the consent acknowledging your desire and understanding of the process upon arrival to the hospital.

A responsible adult must remain with you while you labor in the tub. This responsible adult can be a family member or a staff member.

*Tub and towels are provided.*

If you have any questions about the process, please ask your healthcare provider or call the Director of Women's Services at Peterson Regional Medical Center, 830-258-7415.

For more information ask your physician or midwife or call the Women's Services department at Peterson Regional Medical Center at 830-258-7444.



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