

# How will I be cared for during labour and birth in water?

We will try and create a calm, unhurried, relaxed environment, encouraging you as necessary and disturbing you as little as possible. We will listen to your baby's heartbeat, check your temperature, pulse and blood pressure regularly.

## What should I wear?

Wear whatever you feel comfortable in. Some women like being naked when they give birth as it gives the freedom to move around without clothing getting in the way – and you can have skin to skin contact with baby.

Others feel more comfortable in the pool with a cropped top or T-shirt. It is important that you feel relaxed and in control, so what you wear is entirely up to you.

You may find it useful to bring a towelling dressing-gown to keep you warm when you get out of the pool e.g. for the toilet.

## What next?

If you are interested in using the pool, please discuss this with a midwife at your next ante-natal clinic appointment so she can document your wishes.



## Further Information

For further information please contact your Midwife or local Maternity Team:

Lewis and Harris: 01851 704704  
Uists: 01870 603354  
Barra: 07580 384601  
Text Service: 0776 9932 189

*Note. In the event that the Barra Midwife is unavailable, those living in Barra are asked to contact Barra Medical Practice: (01871) 810282, Maternity Dept. in Stornoway: (01851) 708301, or NHS24: freephone 111.*

### Western Isles Domestic Abuse Forum

Abuse can be psychological as well as physical

Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 027 1234  
Stornoway Women's Aid: 01851 704750

## We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- visit our website [www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback) or share your story at - [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk) or tel. 0800 122 31 35
- tel. 01851 708069 Monday-Friday between 9am-5.30pm.

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### Disclaimer

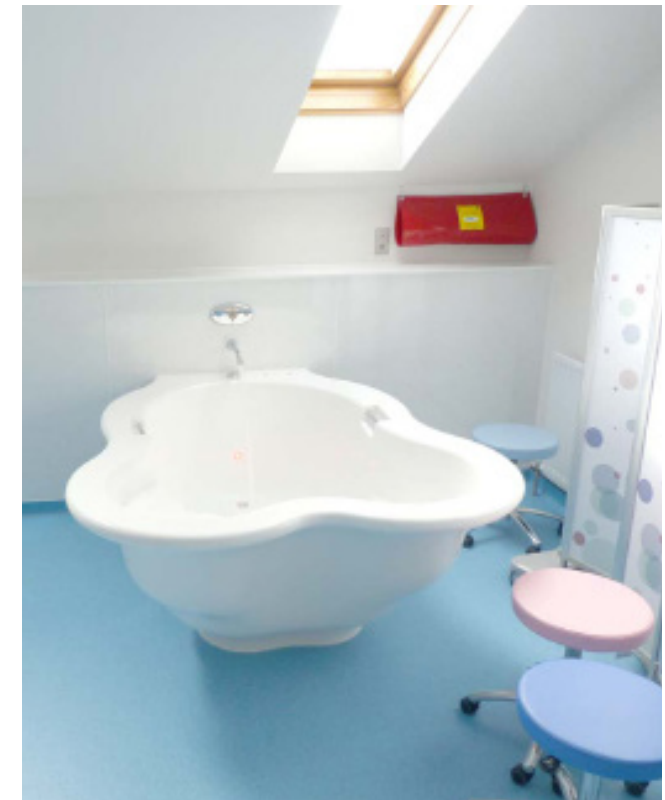
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Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar  
NHS Western Isles

# Water birth



A guide to the birthing pool suite within  
Western Isles Hospital

We understand that women in labour want to feel more relaxed, secure, able to move about freely and keep in control when in labour and giving birth.

This can also help you to have a quicker and more straightforward birth.

## Birthing Pool Suite

In addition to traditional birthing options, Western Isles Hospital provides a birthing pool suite, available in its Maternity Ward, for labour and birth.

Please talk to a midwife if you are interested in using the birthing pool for your labour and/or birth. Your midwife will give you more information and answer any further questions you may have.

*Please note, the birthing pool suite may not always be available.*

## Benefits of water birth

For some women, birthing pools offer a range of benefits. These include:

- less painful contractions
- being less likely to need a pain relieving injection, such as diamorphine
- a shorter labour and less need for drugs (oxytocin) to help make contractions more effective.

## Risks

At this current time, there is no evidence of increased adverse effects to the baby or woman from labouring or giving birth in water (Source: Cochrane Database, 16/05/2018). There are a number of rare risks for babies born under water. This includes the risk of drowning, the cord rupturing (splitting apart) and infection.

## Is water birth suitable for me?

Water birth is suitable for women who are healthy, between 37-42 weeks pregnant, have had an uncomplicated pregnancy and have no serious medical illnesses or complications and, if applicable, their previous labours have been completely normal.

However, we do not encourage women with open skin lesions to have a water birth as the risk of infection from the pool environment increases. Your midwife will advise if this is applicable to you.

## Safety

It is recommended that the pool's water temperature is regulated so that you are comfortable. This should be between 35°C-37°C in the first stage of labour and approximately 37°C for the birth of your baby. The midwife will check your temperature, the water temperature and the room temperature every hour.

You will be encouraged to drink extra water to prevent dehydration.

## When should I go into the pool?

There is not enough evidence about when is the best time to enter the pool. However, we believe that the best time is when your labour is established.

## Pain relief

If you require gas and air this can be used in the pool. However, if you need a pain relieving injection or an epidural you will need to leave the pool.

If you have previously had a pain relieving injection, four hours should lapse before getting into the pool.

## The birth

As the birth approaches, you will know whether you wish to birth in the pool; some women prefer to birth their baby out of the water.

In the pool, your baby will be allowed to birth with no-one touching – and you will be supported with verbal guidance from your midwife to help ensure your baby is not stimulated to breathe before reaching the surface.

The midwife will then raise your baby gently to the surface, head first. Your baby will then start to breathe, so its head must not go back into the water. You may notice that your baby is a blue colour, has its eyes open and is very calm, which is a normal reaction to a water birth.

## The third stage (placenta)

We may ask you to leave the pool to deliver your placenta. If your birth is straightforward, you may choose not to have the syntometrine injection (which helps your placenta deliver). Please ask your midwife for further information.

## Reasons for leaving the pool

You will be asked to leave the pool for the following:

- to use the toilet
- for internal vaginal examinations to assess progress
- if there is any difficulty hearing the baby's heart rate or any irregularity in the baby's heart rate
- if your blood pressure, temperature or pulse rate becomes abnormal
- if your midwife is concerned about you and/or your baby's condition
- extra pain relief (injections or epidural)
- if the labour is not progressing as expected
- sometimes for delivery of the placenta (afterbirth)

You can also choose to get out of the pool at any point in your labour.