

10 Reasons to Consider Water Birth



There is so much to know about having a baby. For a lot of us, we just assume birth has to take place in a hospital. Sometimes it does, but it's not the only place to have a baby. There are of course accidental home births -- one of my friends had her daughter unexpectedly on the kitchen floor in her home. And there are planned home births, as well. Those are the kind of stories that remind me how

we can trust ourselves and have faith in our ability to have a baby naturally, without issue, and without 398 nurses, residents, and doctors monitoring every second. If you think about it, all of that fuss just adds to the stress. Stress is the last thing you want when in labor.

Enter the water birth. Don't we all feel relaxed in water? Who doesn't love a hot tub? Water births can happen at home or in a birthing center or hospital that has this type of service. And they have amazing benefits. I've got the facts on having a water immersion birth.

1. Water is known to bring pain relief. Generations of women once gave birth in shallow sea water -- the therapeutic effects of water certainly don't have the side effects of labor drugs. The first modern birth pool was built by Russian boat builder Igor Tjarkovsky in the 1970s who, seeing the benefits, installed a glass tank in his home so women could birth with ease there.

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2. Michel Odent, a French obstetrician, took water birth to another level by installing a plastic paddling pool in a hospital so women could birth in water and use less painkillers.

3. To address the naysayers who quip "women aren't dolphins," we have to also remember that we aren't birds but we still fly in planes or hang gliders.

4. In Australia, the New South Wales Department of Health has a goal of having all maternity services (including hospitals) in the area to have birth pools available so women have the option by 2015. This is in response to the rising and problematic c-section rate.

5. The UK has also recommended all women to have the option of a water immersion birth at their maternity units after the revelation that the buoyancy of water allows women to move more easily, change positions better for birthing, and that along with the warmth brings relaxation and hormonal surges that are natural pain relievers.
6. Evidence has emerged that water births could improve blood flow in the uterus, give women less painful contractions, keep blood pressure low, and decrease the risk of a long labor and the need for intervention.
7. Babies born when mom is in a semi-seated position have lower APGAR scores (less than 7) as compared to water birth babies.
8. The benefits are also psychological. Being in a pool to birth makes us feel more in control, and the pool acts as our own little world, giving us a feeling of safety in our own space.
9. Some worry that a water birth could harm baby if she tries to breathe in the water as she leaves the birth canal. Healthy babies have bradycardic response, which signals a newborn to hold her breath under water.
10. Trials have shown that water births decrease the risk of major perineal trauma or tears and hemorrhage over some more traditional birth positions outside of water.

Would you consider a water birth?