What to Know About Having a Water Birth in a Hospital or Birth Center

Wade your way into the water. A 2020 study of more than 26,000 women found that participants in water births reported fewer complications than those who did land births. Yet many people aren't ready to have a water birth in a hospital. They don't know what it is like or how it functions. What exactly is a waterbirth? What are some of its main benefits? What are some safety concerns, and what is a good water birth checklist? Answer these questions and you can find the right way to give birth to your little one. Here is your quick guide.

The Essentials of a Waterbirth

A water birth involves birthing a baby while the pregnant person is sitting, kneeling, or squatting in water. They get into a position inside a tub, but they can get out of the tub if they desire or there is a change in their or their baby's health condition. The pregnant person is never alone. Their partner or a family member can be with them. A midwife remains in the room and assists the person. As soon as the baby comes out, the midwife helps bring it above water. The baby will breathe once it comes out of the water, and it receives oxygen through its umbilical cord. There is little to no risk of the baby inhaling water. You may have heard of water births at home. It is possible to have a water birth inside your own bathtub or swimming pool. But a water birth at a birth center or hospital is safer and easier. A bathtub may not be big or deep enough. You may find it difficult to maintain the water temperature and hygiene of a swimming pool, and a midwife may be hard to access from one.

What to Expect

The water birth begins with a midwife preparing the tub. They can heat the water up to a comfortable temperature and add disinfectants into the water. You can then step inside. While you are inside the water, you can assume any pose that creates an easier birth and a more comfortable position. A midwife can advise you on how to manage your early pains by stretching your legs and lower back. It is common for blood and mucus to pass into the water. The midwife will remove these substances from the water with a net. On rare occasions, they may resupply the tub with fresh water. Many people assume that the entire labor and birth process takes place in the water. You can choose to remain in the water until your baby comes out. But you can leave once you start your contractions or if you feel uncomfortable in the tub. You can return to or remain in the water in order to deliver the placenta.

Benefits of a Water Birth in a Hospital

A hospital water birth has several main benefits. Many people feel a greater sense of privacy inside the pool. Fewer people can look at their bodies or see them in pain. Water is a naturally soothing substance. You may feel less pain inside water than you do outside. This can make for an easier birthing process. The soothing nature of water means that few people require epidurals. Epidurals can have side effects, including lowering blood pressure rates. This means that birthing people with low blood pressure can consider water births. Water will also soothe the newborn baby. Many babies like the feeling of warm water on their skin and therefore many of them do not cry on leaving the water. Having your water birth inside a birth center or hospital lets you take advantage of the center's resources. You will have a team of medical professionals near you at all times.

Safety Considerations

A birth in water is a vaginal birth. Someone who needs a C-section or an alternate means of delivery should not go into the water. Anyone who may have complications at birth should talk to their doctor about a water birth. This includes people who are having multiples. It may be safe, but the form of birth may need to be adjusted. The water should be warm so you are comfortable. But it should not be too hot. If you touch the water and it feels scalding, you should ask the midwife to adjust their temperature. It is very important that the tub and water are sterile. This is another reason why it is better to have water births in birth centers, not at home. Many bathtubs and pools have dangerous bacteria that can infect the baby or parent. Yet some countries have water quality laws about home water. If you bathe and drink in your water, you should be able to birth in your home water. When in doubt, get a water sample analyzed and review your local laws on water quality. Even if you do not expect any complications when giving birth, you should take steps when planning your birth in water. Find the exact hospital you plan on giving birth in. Touch base with the birthing team there.

Supplies for a Water Birth

Medical professionals will take care of the bath, water, and medical tools for you. Before you go to the birthing center, you can bring the following tools to make yourself more comfortable:

- Clothes you can wear in the water (some people prefer a top, while others remain naked in the water)
- A set of clothes you change into
- Plenty of isotonic drinks and water to drink
- Light snacks with plenty of nutrients (trail mixes, yogurt parfaits, etc.)
- Calming music and visuals

- A hairband to hold long and stray hairs back
- A dry towel to wipe the sweat off the forehead, neck, and shoulders

Find Your Best Water Birth Resources

A water birth in a hospital does not have to be complicated. You sit inside a warm tub while you go through labor. A midwife monitors your progress. You can leave the tub if you ever feel uncomfortable. But many people feel safe and comfortable within the water. Babies also feel great. You should touch base with your doctor before a waterbirth, especially if you may have complications. Bring some clean clothes and calming music to create an ideal experience. Find some additional tools for your birth. Edel Immersys products help midwives with water births. Contact us today.