

Women the world over have used water in birth. In fact, in England, the House of Commons health committee on maternity services has recommended that all hospitals provide birthing pool facilities for laboring women.

Why is water so great?

- It eases the pain. Warm water is so effective in reducing the pain of labor that many midwives refer to it as “the home birth epidural.” Water encourages the production of endorphins, nature’s own painkillers. Endorphins produce a sense of well-being which helps you tolerate the physical pain and stops you from feeling overwhelmed by the experience. As one mother said: *“When I got into the water, it made such a difference, it really did ease the pain. I still felt pain, but it was different. The pain had diffused, it wasn’t so concentrated, it felt better. The water helped me to separate the pain from the fear, and enabled me to feel more in control.”*
- It helps you relax. Warm water relaxes you and your muscles, and relaxation is key to lessening pain and having a great birth experience. Because water relaxes pelvic floor muscles, it is easier for the baby to pass through the birth canal, which may shorten labor.

- It frees you from gravity and allows you to adopt the best laboring position. Midwives and enlightened obstetricians through the ages have recognized that ‘mother knows best’ when it comes to finding the least painful and most effective positions for labor. The sheer bulkiness of being nine months pregnant makes it awkward to experiment with different positions on dry land. Water offers a respite from gravity and makes it easier to move and change positions. Your muscles don’t have to support your body so it is less tiring and easier to stay in a comfortable position.
- It reduces the chance of fetal distress. The key to avoiding fetal distress is ensuring plenty of oxygen gets to the uterus. Laboring in water helps to maximize the oxygenated blood supply to the uterus in several ways:
  - If the water is deep enough, the muscles which normally maintain posture against gravity don’t have to work so hard and don’t need so much oxygenated blood, so more is available for the uterus.
  - The water’s buoyancy enables you to lie down without the weight of the pregnant uterus obstructing the heart’s blood vessels. This results in blood flowing more freely into the uterus.
  - As the water is the same temperature as the body, less energy and oxygen is needed to maintain body temperature and

more is available for the uterus.

- The relaxing effect of the water results in fewer stress hormones being produced and less blood is diverted to ‘fight or flight’ muscles, making more blood available to the uterus.

Won’t the baby drown?

No. Babies have chemoreceptors around their mouth which initiate the normal breathing response at birth. These chemoreceptors are only activated by contact with air. Even with a delay between the birth of the head and the body, the baby will not breathe while under water. In addition, the umbilical cord is still supplying all the oxygen the baby needs, just as it did in utero. Of course, if the baby is kept under water for an extended period after it is born, eventually the placenta will stop functioning and the baby will gasp for air, even without chemoreceptor stimulation. *So babies should always be brought to the surface immediately after birth.* As long as they are, there is no danger of drowning. Of course, if you’re still concerned, you can always leave the tub to deliver the baby. You’ll still have benefitted from using the water for your labor.

What about infection?

Studies have shown there is no increased infection risk when women labor or birth in water, even if their bag of waters has broken.

What is the tub like?

BetterBirth's birthing tub for home births is like a large hot tub, only better. It measures five feet in diameter, and is 26 inches deep. There's plenty of room to float, move around, adopt any position, and even have your partner join you if you like. It's inflatable so it's soft and you'll be absolutely comfortable. The form-fit *disposable* liner ensures sanitation.

The tub at BellaNatal Birthing Suites is specially-designed for both sanitation and comfort. There is a platform for your partner to sit on and still be able to support you, and it is 5 feet long. The jets are designed so that they can be cleaned and sanitized (unlike regular jetted tubs which can harbor stagnant water, bacteria, and mold).

Don't worry about monitoring the baby while in the tub. With either tub your midwife will use an underwater doppler so the baby's condition can be monitored without you having to raise up out of the water.

You get incredible service.

At the birthing suites your provider and BellaNatal staff will take care of the tub for you. If you are using one of our tubs at home, you'll take the tub home with you a couple of weeks before you're due. Then you can set it up or wait until we get there and we'll set it up for you. When you are finished using it, we'll empty it, clean it, take it down, and take

it away. You'll have no fuss and no work. You can just concentrate on having a beautiful birth experience.

How much does it cost?

BetterBirth's Waterbirth Service for homebirth adds just \$67\* to our basic maternity care price, and costs even less when purchased as part of a package. See our pricing for details. A waterbirth is included automatically in your package if you are birthing at BellaNatal Birthing Suites.

\* Price subject to change without notice.

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# Water Birth

## The Luxurious Birthing Option



It's what you're expecting.

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