

A birth tub can be rented or an inflatable child's pool can be purchased. You will need to purchase a hose suitable for drinking water, a small fish net and a water thermometer. Some large bathtubs may also be appropriate but should be cleaned and disinfected prior to labour.

The tub should be approximately 4 feet (48") in diameter with an overall depth of 2 feet (24"). Jetted tubs with recirculating systems are not recommended due to the risk of biofilm (bacteria) contamination in the system. Discuss options with your midwife.

The room should be big enough to provide space for midwives to provide appropriate care, have birth equipment and a space or mattress set up in case you need to lie down, and the temperature of the water and room should be easy to control.

The midwife will decide with the mother when it is appropriate to get into the tub, usually not before 5cm dilation and an active labour pattern has been established. The water should reach the level of the mother's breasts when sitting upright to benefit fully from water immersion, and so that the entire baby's body will remain submerged during delivery, to prevent the breathing reflex with stimulation from room air. The mother may be asked to leave the tub if progress is slow, if there are concerns about the mother or the baby or for delivery of the placenta.

Birth tub set up

1. Clean and disinfect the tub prior to installing the liner, and after use. Consider using a liner for jetted tubs.
2. Fill the tub when the midwife arrives or after discussion with your midwife.
3. Allow the hot water to run for three minutes before filling begins. This allows the pipes to clear of stagnant water and sediment. Use a new hose suitable for drinking water for filling portable tubs.

4. Do not use gray water or recycled water to fill the pool. Do not add anything to the water.

5. Water temperature should be maintained between 36 degrees and 38 degrees C for the birth.

6. Municipal water is considered safe for up to 6 hours. Well water is generally considered safe up to 6 hours. Make sure the well water has been tested in the last year.

7. Empty the pool every 6 hours. Use a new liner if there is visible contamination or sediment.

8. Large amounts of hot water will be needed for a waterbirth. Have kettles or large pots available for boiling water and a bucket for emptying water.

9. Consider turning up the temperature on the water heater prior to the labour and birth.

Emptying and cleaning the tub

1. Dispose of all solid debris, blood clots and faeces into the toilet to prevent clogging the tub drain.
2. Use a submersible or external pump to empty the water from portable tubs.
3. Dispose of liner, debris net and other contaminated items that were used in the tub.
4. Disinfect the bathtub or pool with a 1:10 bleach to water solution.

