

SETTING UP FOR A WATERBIRTH

Water is highly effective during labor to ease pain and encourage relaxation. I strongly recommend its use whether you plan to birth in water or not. However, it also provides a wonderfully gentle environment for birth and makes for an easier transition for the newly born baby. It's good for mothers and babies!

For more information I strongly recommend reading "Gentle Birth Choices" by Barbara Harper. You can also check out her web site at www.waterbirth.org.

You can use any pool that is deep enough. Unless you have a garden tub, your home bath tub is probably not this deep (it needs to cover tummy), and I don't really recommend kiddie pools, although they will do in a pinch.

Consider setting the birth pool up on a piece of plastic or tarp, covered with a thick blanket to absorb any spilled water. A round vinyl table cloth works well and isn't as slippery as plastic. Have some extra towels and/or bath mats to soak up spills if they occur.

You will need one **NEW** hose that is long enough to reach from the water source to the pool, and from the pool to wherever it will be drained following the birth. You can fill the pool from a washing machine connection or a faucet, which may require an adapter. If using a faucet, it needs to be one with adequate water pressure and high enough from the sink so that the hose doesn't kink. Removing a shower head and connecting the water hose there is also a recommended option. If the sink adapter supplied with the pool does not fit your sink you will need to purchase one that does.

Most water heaters do not hold enough hot water. You might consider turning your water heater temperature higher until after the birth.

It is recommended that you fill and drain the pool (using specific instructions for the pool you will be using) at least once prior to labor so you are familiar with how to do it. Mom, get in it! Your body will displace the water level. (If Dad is planning on getting in during the birth then he should get in now too.) The water should come to a level of your breasts. You want your tummy completely covered if at all possible. Once you have been in the pool with the water at the correct level make a note of the water level with you *out* so when you fill it for the birth you will know how much water to put in.

Have a fish net with a long handle. This is used to scoop out any feces or blood clots expelled into the water. A small plastic footstool is also great to have handy, especially for nursing the baby in the pool afterwards if the water is deep, and they are inexpensive. It should be cleaned prior to putting in the pool. It can also be used to help get into and out of the pool if the height of the pool walls presents a problem.

When you go into labor set up the pool where you previously determined was the best site. Please don't forget to add the provided pool liner before you add water. Drape the liner into the pool, pushing down completely all around the bottom. Make sure the liner is draped around the walls of the pool evenly on the outside of the pool.

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Unless you are using a pool with a heater you should not fill the pool until you are in active labor. The pool should be filled with very warm fresh water. Most water heaters will run out of hot water before the pool gets filled so it is usually best to just use hot, then add cold until the right temperature is reached. The water temperature should never be over 100 degrees. 96 - 98 degrees is perfect!

After use, clean up is easy. If you are using the pump that came with the pool, drain the pool into a safe area (keeping in mind that there may be some small clots which may clog up a drain if the drain doesn't work well). The liner should be thrown away without a mess. The pool should then be wiped down carefully and thoroughly using a 1:10 ratio concentration of bleach/water solution before deflating. Once thoroughly dry, carefully fold and pack into the storage container. The water pump should also be thoroughly cleaned with the bleach water solution. Easiest way to do this is by filling a bucket with the bleach water and allowing the pump to drain the bucket after the pool has been drained. Allow the pump to dry and pack into the storage container along with the pool, air pump and other loaned accessories, such as adaptors, etc.

Best wishes for a beautiful, rewarding water labor and birth experience!

General waterbirth supplies needed:

- Plastic or vinyl tarp and/or blanket for under pool
- Extra towels for splash/spill clean up
- Extra large bath towel for drying off
- Small to medium aquarium fish net
- Water thermometer (such as cheap aquarium thermometer) or baby bath thermometer
- Bleach
- Large cleaning bucket and cleaning cloths, rags, and/or sponge
- New garden water hose and adapter (if needed)