

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. (I have this book in my library.) 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 my sink adapter 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.

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 about at your breasts. You want your tummy completely covered. 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 clots expelled into the water.

A small plastic footstool is 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.

When you go into labor set up the pool where you previously determined was the best site. Drape the drop cloth into the pool (note: you do not use a drop cloth with a portable spa), pushing down completely all around the bottom. Use the masking tape to tape the drop cloth to the pool where necessary. Put one tablespoon of bleach into 1 ¼ cup of water. Use a clean sponge or rag to wipe down the sides of the drop cloth. Dad or another person should do this.

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. 99 degrees is perfect! Keep in mind that if you are using a spa the jets may cause the water to cool slightly when run.