



**OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY
 PROCEDURE**

Water for pain management during labour and/or birth

Scope (Staff):	Maternity staff (midwifery and obstetric)
Scope (Area):	WNHS labour and birthing areas within King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH), Family Birth Centre (FBC), Osborne Park Hospital (OPH) and Community Midwifery Program (CMP)
This document should be read in conjunction with this Disclaimer	

KEMH, FBC, OPH and CMP follow the state-wide **Mandatory Policy [0049/17](#)** and **Clinical Guidelines for Women Requesting Immersion in Water for Pain Management During Labour and / or Birth**. Go directly to the [state-wide guideline \(PDF 470KB\)](#) for guidance on the safe provision of water birth.

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Aims

- To provide midwives and doctors site specific guidance on caring for women who choose to use water in labour and /or birth.
- Process for successful evacuation of a woman from a birthing pool during labour and / or birth if required.

Go directly to, and follow, the [state-wide guideline \(PDF 470KB\)](#) and Mandatory Policy [0049/17](#) for guidance on the safe provision of water birth.

Specific requirements at KEMH, OPH and CMP

- **For consumer information:** See WNHS Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby book and brochure [Labour and/or Birth Using Water \(PDF 977KB\)](#) (2016)
- **Room suitability for inflatable pools and water birth**
 - **KEMH Labour and Birth Suite (LBS)**

Suitability	Room number
MOST suitable	1, 8 and 12
Suitable	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13 and 14
Unsuitable	7, 9, 10, 15 and 16

- **FBC:** All rooms suitable. Inflatable pools are provided.
- **OPH:** Birth suite bays 3, 4, 5 and 6 suitable. Inflatable pools are provided.

Preparation in the antenatal period

Antenatal discussion regarding waterbirth assists in informed decision making for healthy women enquiring about this option.

For those women who are considered healthy and with a low risk, singleton pregnancy who have chosen water for labour and/or birth the midwife and/or doctor are to discuss and facilitate the following during the antenatal period:

1. Any reasons why immersion in water is not advised for the woman (see inclusion criteria on state-wide guideline)
2. Benefits and risks to the woman and neonate
3. That a midwife competent in water birth needs to be available at the time of birth
4. Equipment that the woman may hire/purchase for waterbirth at WNHS:
 - a. If women are using the bath(s) on LBS they will be required to bring in a debris net.
 - b. If women are hiring or purchasing an inflatable birth pool, equipment including hoses; tap fittings; debris net; are available through a number of external suppliers.

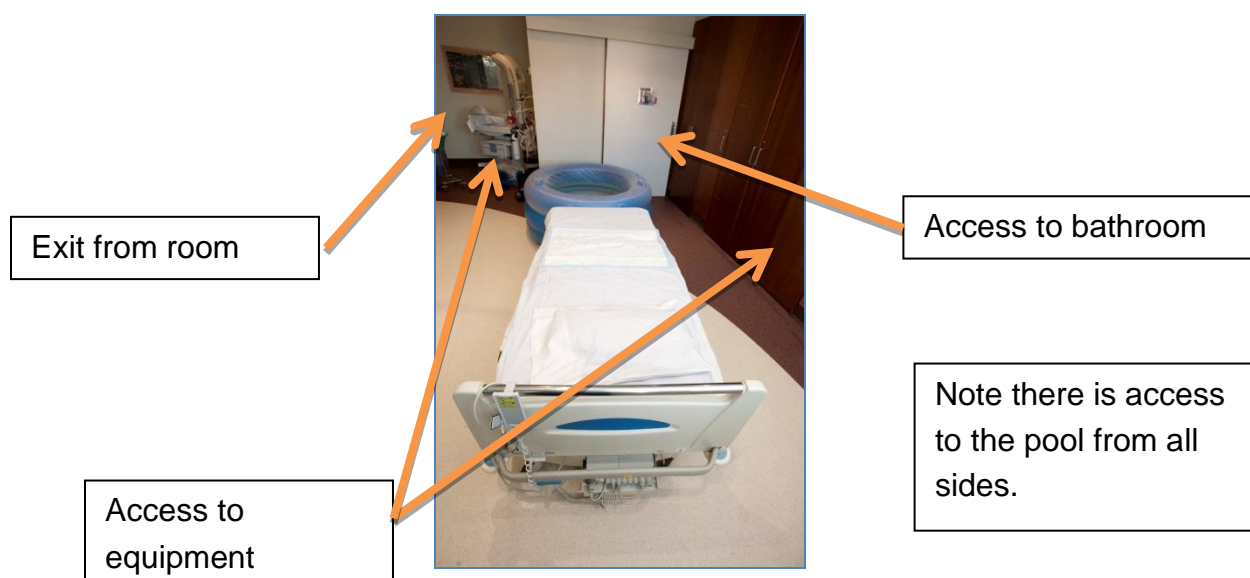
5. Read and sign MR215.09 (KEMH) / MR20.1 (OPH) 'Agreement for use of water for birth' form
6. For women planning a home birth with CMP, the woman and her support person must be informed of their responsibility and accountability in relation to obtaining all the equipment required for waterbirth, ensuring that it is safe and in working order and have made themselves aware of appropriate disposal.

Preparing the room safely for a waterbirth

Key points

1. An evacuation pod must be in the room of the woman labouring and/birthing in water.
2. Ideal accessibility is being able to gain access on all sides (or at least two sides) of the pool/bath.
3. The woman must be able to demonstrate that she is able to enter and exit the bath/pool without placing herself or anyone else at physical risk of injury.
4. Ensure that when the woman leaves the pool/bath there are towels available to dry themselves with and stand on to prevent water spillage and minimise risk of slips/falls.
5. Non slip mats, towels or other suitable linen should be on the floor surrounding the pool/bath to reduce risk from slips. Attend to any water spillage to minimise slipping.
6. Ensure there are no electrical appliances near the pool/bath.
7. The bed should be accessible in the room and would be moved to the position in picture below in the event of an evacuation. The inflatable pool and bed must be situated to allow access to all equipment and the bathroom, with the bed alongside the bath to allow for an evacuation route from the room (as necessary).

Placement of the pool in the room



Evacuation process

Evacuation of an unconscious woman from the pool/bath

1. Press the assist bell (KEMH) / emergency bell (OPH).
2. Maintain the woman's airway in the pool.
3. Provide clinical handover to responders.
4. Place bed/trolley alongside pool at the height of the pool.



Bed level with bath

Instructions for use of the evacuation pod

Note: The below are to be used following staff attendance at approved training.

- Unroll the evacuation pod, keep the mesh side up and unclip the belts.
- Push the pod down in the water and under the woman, ensuring the woman's head is at the V end and the foot straps are in the appropriate position. This may require the person attending to step into the pool.
- The woman should be lying centrally on the pod.
- Secure the straps at the chest and knees and adjust the belts firmly.
- To remove the woman from the pool there must be two people at either side. During the manoeuvre the person maintaining the airway may have to release the woman's head and then, immediately once transferred, establish the airway again. Ensure pod strap is maintained at the chest and not near the neck/ airway.
- Complete the transfer from the pool to the bed/trolley. Transfer needs to be in three stages:
 - 1st stage – Positioning the woman within the pod, while moving the pod to the edge of the pool/bath
 - 2nd stage – Slide the woman so her buttocks are on pool edge / end of bed
 - 3rd stage – Transfer the woman up the bed

Important notes

- Regularly check the stitching on the pod.
- In the rare event the evacuation pod is used for purposes other than **training**, it is to be disposed of and replaced.

Documentation

- Document events in the progress notes (or CMP MR08)

Occupational health and safety considerations

1. Where possible 'minimal handling' techniques should be used to protect both the woman and the staff when using the evacuation pod. These include:
 - The midwife's posture should be held in a position to maintain the normal curves of the spine.
 - The use of kneeler pads, cushions or a low stool will assist with correct back care.
 - It is important to prevent unsupported forward bending, twisting or overreaching when caring for a woman in the pool/bath. Avoid leaning for prolonged periods.
 - Reduce the need for repetitive or sustained awkward procedures/postures.
 - Reduce the need for sustained movements or application of force.
 - Ensure that when handling a load, it is stable and balanced before performing a task.
 - Do not handle loads which are difficult to grasp or hold. Use an appropriate device.
2. Linen may be heavy when wet, only half fill linen bags to minimise OSH lifting risk.
3. Consider if a slide sheet should be placed on the bed (this will aid momentum during the slide and minimise water soakage of bed).

References and related policies, procedures and guidelines

- WA Health MP 0049/17: [Women requesting immersion in water for pain management during labour and/or birth policy](#) including [clinical guideline](#)
- WNHS Clinical Guidelines, [Obstetrics and Gynaecology](#): Labour and Birth guidelines
- RANZCOG. (2021). [Water immersion during labour and birth](#) (external website).

Other resources or related forms









Forms:

- Progress Notes (MR250) MR55A (OPH) Integrated Progress Notes
- MR 08 (CMP) Birth Record

WNHS Patient brochures:

- [Labour and/or Birth Using Water \(PDF 977KB\)](#) brochure (2016)
- [Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby \(PDF 7.66MB\)](#) book

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Keywords:	Evacuation in water birth, water birth pod, birth in water, immersion in water, inflatable birth pool, labour in water, non-pharmacological pain relief, waterbirth, water birth		
Document owner:	CMCs birthing areas (KEMH, FBC, OPH, CMP) Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate		
Author/Reviewer:	Clinical Midwifery Consultants: Labour and Birth Suites (KEMH / OPH), FBC/ CMP/MGP		
Date first issued:	August 2010(v1) [Water birth]	Version:	8
Reviewed dates:	Mar 2014(v2); Feb 2015(v3-amend); May 2016(v4); Oct 2018(v5); June 2019(v6); Feb 2023(v7); Apr 2023 (v8 – minor amend only)	Next review date:	Feb 2026
Endorsed by:	Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate Management Committee	Date:	01/02/2023
NSQHS Standards (v2) applicable:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  1: Clinical Governance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  2: Partnering with Consumers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  3: Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infection <input type="checkbox"/>  4: Medication Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>  5: Comprehensive Care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  6: Communicating for Safety <input type="checkbox"/>  7: Blood Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  8: Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration	
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Version history

Version number	Date	Summary
1	Aug 2010	First version. Titled 'Water birth (B5.22)' contained a link to the WA guidelines for immersion in water for pain management and/or birth.
2	Mar 2014	Linked to state policy
3	Feb 2015	Minor amendment- changed template, numbering removed from title.
4	May 2016	Provided information about waterbirth in the main Labour and Birth Suite
5	Oct 2018	Amalgamated content from three individual guidelines on water birth dating from Oct 2008 into this procedure document. Previous versions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water Birth and Labouring in Water (version dated May 2016) 2. Evacuation Procedure: Labour and Birth in Water (version dated Sept 2016) 3. Community Midwifery Program: Labour and Birth in Water: Midwifery Care (version dated Sept 2014) Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMP specific: Clients planning a home birth - the client and her support person must be informed of their responsibility and accountability in relation to obtaining all the equipment required for water birthing, ensuring that it is safe and in working order and have made themselves aware of appropriate disposal
6	June 2019	Women who are eligible for labour and/or birth in water may access/utilise the LBS baths or bring in their own pool.

7	Feb 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformatted layout • Added OPH details: Birth suite bays 3, 4, 5 and 6 suitable for inflatable pools. • Additional OSH safety points added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The woman must be able to demonstrate that she is able to enter and exit the bath/ pool without placing herself or anyone else at physical risk of injury. ➤ Ensure that when the woman leaves the pool/bath there are towels available to dry themselves with and stand on to prevent water spillage and minimise OSH risk of slips/ falls. ➤ Ensure there are no electrical appliances near the pool/bath. ➤ When using evacuation pod, the pod strap is maintained at the chest and not near the neck/ airway. ➤ The use of kneeler pads, cushions or a low stool will assist with correct back care. • The bed should be accessible in the room and moved into position (see picture) in the event of an evacuation.
8	Apr 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor amendment- removed word 'mirror' from equipment

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