



## LOCAL ANTENATAL COURSES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

### Use of water for labour or birth

Warm water is often used by people to help them unwind and relax. In labour too, warm water can aid relaxation and ease pain. The Government has stated:

"We recommend that all hospitals make it their policy to make full provision whenever possible for women to choose the position which they prefer for labour and birth with the option of a birth pool where this is practicable"

(Winterton, N house of Commons Health Committee, Second Report Maternity Services, 23 February 1992 ISBN 0 10 283092 4)

#### The benefits of water birth:

'I was demanding an epidural but my midwife encouraged me to try the pool. Humouring her, I sank into the water and was suddenly back in control and chanting! My son was born one and a half hours later. I was ecstatic.'

#### For you:

- \* The water supports your body, making moving around and changing position much easier. It might be really helpful if you have a physical disability
- \* Warm water can be very relaxing. This can help you let go and allow your body to do its work
- \* Warm water may reduce pain and the need for other forms of pain relief
- \* A birthing pool allows you your own space and may give you a sense of privacy

#### For your baby:

- \* If you are more relaxed your baby will be under less stress and will get a better oxygen supply
- \* The unwanted side effects of other forms of pain relief like pethidine or an epidural will be avoided if the water has helped you manage without them
- \* A more gentle birth

**Babies must be brought gently to the surface as soon as they are born**

#### Possible problems:

It is not fully understood what stimulates newborn babies to take their first breath. If labour progresses normally and the water temperature in the pool is around body heat, babies do not inhale while under water.

# birthmatters

AT THE START OF FAMILY LIFE



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### **Labouring and delivering in water may not be a good idea if:**

- \* you are expecting more than one baby
- \* you are less than 37 weeks' pregnant
- \* you have bleeding
- \* you have severe pre-eclampsia
- \* your baby becomes stressed
- \* there is meconium stained amniotic fluid
- \* your labour is induced or speeded up with drugs (Syntocinon)
- \* you have sedation, such as pethidine
- \* it is more than 24 hours since your membranes ruptured

based on: The Use of Water during Birth, the Royal College of Midwives, May 1994