

**Underwater Birth Informed Consent**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have attended the Underwater Birth Education Class. I have reviewed the potential risks and benefits of underwater birth with my obstetrical care providers.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that underwater birth means giving birth to my baby while my pelvis and my baby’s emerging head are submerged under water.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that underwater birth may involve certain benefits for me, including increased relaxation, decreased anxiety, and decreased pain. There may also be a decreased need for medical interventions in my labor, including epidural anesthesia, oxytocin, pain medication, and episiotomy. I may have a decreased risk of tearing of the perineum.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that medical knowledge about the risks and benefits of underwater birth is incomplete. There may be risks that are unknown. There may be benefits that are unknown. The magnitude of the risks and benefits of underwater birth is unknown.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that underwater birth may involve certain risks for my baby and me. The risks to my baby appear to be rare, but may include infection, water intoxication with damage to the baby’s lungs, drowning, brain damage, seizures, anemia from tearing of the cord, and death.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that underwater birth will only be available to those patients with a low risk pregnancy and those who experience no complications during labor and delivery. I understand that if complications do arise, I must allow my caregivers to assist me out of the tub.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have completed the "Waterbirth Education" class on: \_\_\_\_\_

***I have read the above, understand and accept the potential risks associated with underwater birth. I understand that I can change the plan for delivery at any time. I have had the opportunity to review my questions and concerns with my care provider. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I also agree to leave the birthing tub immediately upon the request of the physician, CNM or RN, at any point during my labor.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date / Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician/Certified Nurse–Midwife Signature



## Underwater Birth Risk Discussion

Underwater birth has been used in Europe for many years as a birthing method for women who have low risk pregnancies and no complications during their labor.

Underwater birth has been used in the United States for the past 15 years. To have this option available to you at Wentworth–Douglass Hospital, you are required to complete this informed consent with your care provider and attend the Waterbirth Class offered at the Birth Center.

Underwater birth promotes relaxation. The birthing woman may experience less discomfort and thus less anxiety. As a result, less adrenaline is produced and endorphin and oxytocin production may be enhanced. Underwater birth facilitates maternal positioning which may assist with optimal fetal descent. Additionally, the sensation of relative weightlessness provides support to the birthing woman.

Reports of underwater births in Europe and the United States indicate that about half of those planning an underwater birth end up leaving the tub for the simple reason that they choose to do so. It is important that underwater birth be viewed as a birth option that may be helpful, rather than a goal or a plan.

European studies of underwater birth show no increased risk of morbidity or mortality to mother and baby. In general, the risk has been shown to be no greater than the risk associated with low–risk vaginal delivery. However, long–term clinical studies of underwater birth have not yet taken place in the United States. Underwater birth in the United States is considered to be subject to unknown risk – up to and including risk of infection associated with exposure to bacteria in the water and death of mother and baby – as a result of complications of delivery. Specific complications reported in the literature include water aspiration by the baby with increased risk for pneumonia or damage to lung tissues and umbilical cord separation with increased risk for blood loss, anemia, or death for the baby. Because of concern about these possible risks, the RCOG (Royal College of Obstetrician/Gynecologists) has recommended that patients consider leaving the tub for birth. Because of a lack of published studies about underwater birth in the United States, there has not been a position statement about underwater birth from the ACOG (American College of Obstetrician/Gynecologists). There has been a published opinion from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which states that, the practice of delivering a newborn into water has risks and that there is inadequate data demonstrating that this method of delivery is safe.

Underwater birth will be available only to those patients with a low–risk pregnancy and those who experience no complications during labor or delivery. If unanticipated complications should arise during labor or delivery, you must allow us to assist you out of the tub. Please review with your care provider further questions regarding the risks and benefits of underwater birth.

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Wentworth–Douglass Hospital

BIRTH CENTER

**UNDERWATER BIRTH INFORMED CONSENT  
& RISK DISCUSSION**



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