



Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Policy

The policy uses the terms 'woman' or 'mother' throughout. These should be taken to include people who do not identify as women but are pregnant or have given birth.

1. Purpose

The Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Policy (the policy) establishes the clinical practices and requirements to ensure the safe care of women and their unborn/newborn babies when water immersion is chosen during labour and birth.

This policy is a mandatory requirement for Health Service Providers under the Clinical Services Planning and Programs *Policy Framework* pursuant to section 26(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(l) of the *Health Services Act 2016*.

2. Applicability

This policy is applicable to all Health Service Providers (HSPs) who provide the option of water immersion during labour and/or birth.

The requirements contained within this policy are applicable to the services purchased from contracted health entities where it is explicitly stated in the contract between the contracted health entity and the State of Western Australia or Health Service Provider. The State of Western Australia or Health Service Provider contract manager is responsible for ensuring that any obligation to comply with this policy by the contracted health entity is accurately reflected in the relevant contract and managed accordingly.

3. Policy Requirements

HSPs must develop local procedures in compliance with the [Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard](#) which include the following:

- protocols for candidate selection
- responsibilities of the health professional
- training/competency requirements for relevant health professionals (i.e., obstetricians, midwives)
- exclusion criteria including recommending women leave the water if urgent maternal or foetal compromise develops
- clear communication regarding risks and benefits to the candidate and support people
- consideration of workforce issues
- infection control and work health and safety requirements
- emergency management
- documentation requirements

- audit and evaluation requirements.

4. Compliance Monitoring

The Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office within Clinical and Excellence Division will require HSPs to provide an annual report regarding the outcomes of the audit and evaluation required under this policy at the end of the financial year.

The statewide information on the clinical outcomes of the use of water immersion for birth recorded on the maternity dashboard will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy.

5. Related Documents

The following documents are mandatory pursuant to this policy:

- [Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard](#)

6. Supporting Information

The following information is not mandatory but informs and/or supports the implementation of this policy:

- N/A

7. Definitions

The following definition(s) are relevant to this policy.

Term	Definition
Water immersion	Use of warm water in a fixed or inflatable birthing pool or bath, during labour as a form of relaxation and analgesia.

8. Policy Contact

Enquiries relating to this policy may be directed to:

Title: Principal Midwifery Advisor
 Directorate: Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office
 Email: CNMO.CED@health.wa.gov.au

9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Effective from	Review date	Amendment(s)
MP 0049/17	03 April 2017	03 April 2017	03 April 2022	Original version
MP 0049/17 v.1.0	16 November 2023	16 November 2023	November 2026	Complete policy review conducted with amendments as listed below.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy title amended from “Women requesting immersion in water for pain management during labour and/or birth” to “Water Immersion During Labour and Birth”. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of Preamble (after title and before Purpose) stating “The policy uses the terms 'woman' or 'mother' throughout. These should be taken to include people who do not identify as women but are pregnant or have given birth”. • Policy purpose updated to align with the policy requirements. • Policy requirements updated to require HSPs to develop procedures in line with the <i>Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard</i>. • Compliance monitoring updated to reflect policy requirements. • Related document: “Statewide clinical guidelines for women requesting immersion in water for pain management during labour and/or birth” renamed “<i>Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard</i>” and updated to reflect current practices. • Policy contact changed from Women’s and Newborns Health Networks Development Officer to Principal Midwifery Officer, Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer. 				
MP 0049/17 v.1.1	14 February 2024	14 February 2024	November 2026	Amendment as listed below.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related document ‘Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard’ – the ‘Water birth Patient Information’ brochure updated to 2024 publication-NMHS Women and Newborn Health Service. 				

10. Approval

Approval by	Dr David Russell-Weisz, Director General, Department of Health
Approval date	1 March 2017

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