

Mums-to-be missing out on benefits of water immersion

May 24 2012

Queensland mums-to-be are being denied access to water immersion during labour even though research shows it shortens labour and reduces interventions.

A review of water immersion practices by UQ's Queensland Centre for Mothers & Babies has found the underlying reason for the low rates of water immersion in [labour](#) isn't the lack of baths in facilities, according to Centre director Professor Sue Kruske.

“It seems to be a combination of lack of state-wide guidelines on water immersion for clinicians, a lack of quality information for women and a system governed more by the status quo than by evidence,” Professor Kruske said.

“This is despite good evidence associating water immersion use in labour with positive health benefits, high satisfaction rates, no adverse effects to mother or child, and a possible reduction in costs for the health care system.

“Hopping into a birth pool when in labour can offer women a sense of privacy, security and can help them keep their body as relaxed as possible.”

Professor Kruske said it was concerning only 20 percent of birth facilities in Queensland had suitable baths and agreed for women to use it.

“We found 12 percent of women in Queensland used water immersion during their labour and/or birth in 2009,” she said.

“However, 22 percent of women would have liked to use a birth pool or bath during their labour but couldn't.

“Our research found that 28 percent of birthing facilities in Queensland say they offer women with access to water during labour and 16 percent of facilities say they offer water births.”

Gold Coast obstetrician Dr Andrew Davidson, who supports women's decision to labour in a bath or pool, said the evidence is clear water immersion is safe and effective.

“I have seen countless women benefit from the buoyancy of water in labour and [birth](#). I have no doubt more women should have access to this,” he said.

Nikita Kinnane, a Mackay mother of two, was able to access water immersion during her labour at Mackay Base Hospital and agrees more women should have it available to them in labour.

“I recommend to everyone I know who is pregnant that they definitely should try to use a bath in labour. Water made a world of difference to me,” she said.

Professor Kruske said it's important that women continue to drive change in maternity care.

“Our health professionals and policy makers need to listen to and respond not only to what women want in labour but equally to the scientific evidence that supports it,” she said.

She said [women](#) can get can access up-to-date, high quality, unbiased information about water immersion from the Centre's website www.qcmb.org.au/bath

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Mums-to-be missing out on benefits of water immersion (2012, May 24) retrieved 1 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-05-mums-to-be-benefits-immersion.html>

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