


# Water solution to labour pains

*Re-popularised by the West, water births are finding takers. Doctors share pros, cons and facts about this alternative birthing procedure*



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Water birth can take place in some hospitals and birthing centres with tubs.

**By Rachel Dammala**

Express News Service

**HYDERABAD:** Many pregnant couples have been considering giving water birth a try these days, thanks to the West helping re-popularise what was used by the Middle East aeons ago. Now, when you hear the term ‘water birth’, many of you may picture the iconic scene from the thriller, *A Quiet Place*, where Evelyn (Emily Blunt) gives birth to her baby in the bathtub. As close as it is to reality, doctors break the process down for us.

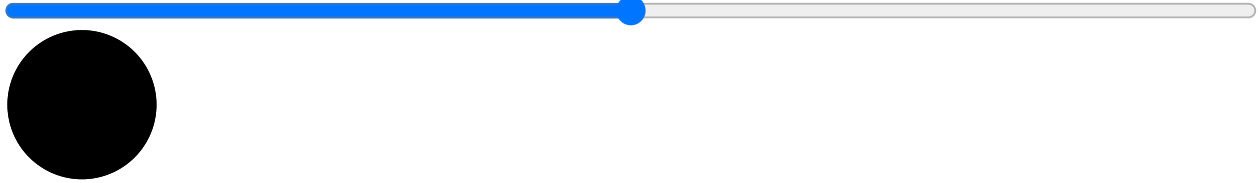
D Bhagya Lakshmi S, consultant obstetrics, gynaecologist and laparoscopic surgeon at Yashoda Hospitals, starts by explaining what the delivery would look like. “When a woman has a water birth, all or part of her labour and delivery happens

in a birth pool. Water birth can take place in some hospitals and birthing centres with tubs. Alternatively, you can choose to have a water birth at home in the presence of a midwife and other certified healthcare professionals.”

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There are several reasons why women have been considering this option. Dr Bhagya lists some. “A water birth is said to ease the pain and make labour quicker. The warm water helps comfort and relax the tense mother. Many also say that it reduces stress and lowers blood pressure if the mother is anxious.”

She says, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee (AOCG), being in water during the first stage of labour is associated with a shorter labour and decreased use of spinal and epidural analgesia too.

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On some of the disadvantages of water birth, Dr Bhagya says, “When the mother is pushing the baby, her bowel may open in the water. This is very common; it is immediately cleaned by the midwife, but there is a chance of infection.”

However, not all women can go for a water birth. Those who have no pregnancy-related complications, are healthy and between 37-41 weeks pregnant, can opt for this. But it's a bad idea for those younger than 17 and older than 35. Those with diabetes, any infection, carrying more than one baby or having a premature/large/breech baby should avoid this method.

Dr Saradha Saranu, senior consultant and professor (obstetrics and gynaecology) at Kamineni Hospitals, believes that the main reason for it to become popular is pain relief. "During the first stage of labour, the mother can float in the water which helps relieve the pain."

It's also important to talk about some of the drawbacks of this procedure. Dr Saradha mentions some of them. Monitoring of the foetus and mother can get difficult when she is in a water pool during labour. Another problem is the failure to identify the rupture of membranes, which could result in water entering the uterine cavity, causing complications. Also, if the water bed and its temperature are not well-maintained, it can harm the baby and mother. She says that it is also not particularly useful for women unwilling to take injections.

Indie Kaur, director of midwifery at Fernandez Foundation, says that the first good thing about water birthing is that it empowers women to choose or decline systematic medical intervention in the process.

About some of the things to keep in mind during a water birth, she says, "It has to be carried out by trained professionals only.

The couple must be counselled about the process, and care must be taken to ensure the woman ticks all the boxes of being fit, with no complications. The environment the mother gives birth in is important too. The same goes with the involvement and inclusion of the birthing partner. An empowered and comfortable mother feels less fearless about the entire process."

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