

## **WATER BIRTH: A NEW FACET IN INDIAN SCENARIO**

**Vindhya Guntupalli \*, Revathi. G, Nouharika. K, and Nagamani. P**

Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry Nirmala College of Pharmacy, Mangalagiri, Guntur, AP, India

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the present day scenario women are highly career oriented all over the world. This situation is also developed in India from past few years and spreading faster to the rural community also. As professional education has achieved, it has opened doors for career options exponentially. Now-a-days it is well known fact that Indian women are delaying the marriages and child birth and as a result c-section birth rate has increased leading to complicated health issues. Gynecologists advice that child bearing age to be 22-28yrs which suits anatomically for the child development. This period has been increased to above 33yrs which is leading to many c-sections, leaving the mother and baby to suffer from various health problems. It's an alarming situation that natural births are highly reduced and c-section births are increased. Unwanted c-section births are also increased, this can be overcome by water birth which is a natural birth process and new facet in Indian scenario. Water birth is a technique where women give birth to the baby in warm water. It is a well known fact that warm water provide relaxation.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The use of water during labour and birth are not new, there had been records of its use in several civilizations.<sup>(1)</sup> A variety of birthing options are available today. Although the documentation of the first water birth is recorded in 1803, in France,<sup>(2)</sup> this modality of birth came to be used more only after the 1980s, when Michel Odent introduced a birthing pool in a maternity hospital.<sup>(1)</sup> There are numerous international studies on water birth, which present the maternal and neonatal results<sup>(3-5)</sup> of the attendance in maternity hospitals, in birth centers (BC) and in the home, with the majority of the water births being attended by midwives.<sup>(6)</sup> Beyond location, more and more women are choosing water births as the way their babies enter the world. You may also choose to labor in water and deliver out of the water.

In 2004, the National Supplementary Health Agency (ANS) began to encourage normal birth, and in 2008 published the "Normal Birth is in my Plan" project, aiming to inform the population about the risks related to unnecessary cesarean births and the benefits of normal birth. This review article throws a light on an alternative method of natural birth which is more safe than c-section births in India where most of c-sections are performed unnecessarily.

#### **Water Birth around the World**

In the 1960s, Igor Tjarkovsky, a swimming instructor and midwife, popularized water birth in Russia.

\*Corresponding author: **Vindhya Guntupalli**

Dept. of Pharmaceutical Chemistry Nirmala College of Pharmacy, Mangalagiri, Guntur, AP, India

In 1983, Herman Ponette, an obstetrician, began installing birthing tubs in his hospital in Belgium. Since then, he has attended over 5,500 water births. In the United Kingdom, even the government recognizes the potential benefits of water birth. In 1992, the UK House of Commons recommended that whenever possible, women have the option to birth in water. Nearly half of all maternity hospitals in the UK have installed birthing pools and there are at least 2,000 water births per year.

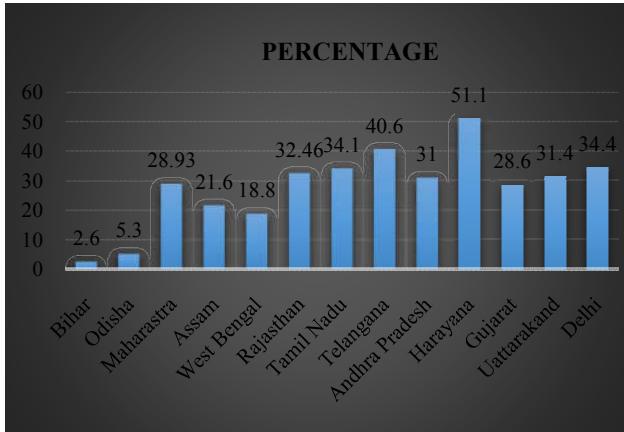
#### **Water Birth in India**

Water birth is relatively recent and rare in India. The first water birth was known by media in 2007 in the capital city Delhi in India. Water birth facilities are being adopted in few hospitals and becoming a slowly growing trend. In India where superstitions play a vital role there is a strong disagreement in implementing water birth. Health care personnel has to take initiative and educate women regarding safety of water birth. Rural areas are to be mostly concentrated and awareness programmes has to be increased.



**Normal Birth**

It's a boon to women in preserving the health aspects of both mother and child. In present scenario the life style of the most women has been changed due to career oriented outlook, food habits, unhealthy relations and imparting the western culture. A woman is losing the good fortune of natural birth in many cases due to the above reasons.



Rate in Increase of c-Section Births in Various states of India in past 5 years

**C-Section Birth**

Nearly 80-90% women except in villages they opt for c-section births, reasons are very astonishing which leads women to think over the health of both mother and child relationship. Most of the women prefer c-section due to unbearable pain without any anatomical abnormalities. In present scenario this condition is considered as a serious problem which is leading to various health issues.

**Water Birth**

The above two medical problems can be overcome by this natural, safest route preferable for both mother and child. Water birth is the process of giving birth in a tub of warm water. The theory behind water birth is that since the baby has already been in the amniotic fluid sac for nine months, birthing in a similar environment is gentler for the baby and less stressful for the mother.<sup>(1)</sup> During a water birth, you'll be submerged in water, usually in a stationary or inflatable tub, and you'll birth your baby in the water.



**Benefits for Mother**

In the later stages of labor, the water has been shown to increase the woman's energy. The water seems to reduce stress-related hormones, allowing the mother's body to produce endorphins which serve as pain-inhibitors.<sup>(2)</sup> Buoyancy

promotes more efficient uterine contractions and improved blood circulation resulting in better oxygenation of the uterine muscles, less pain for the mother, and more oxygen for the baby. Since the water provides a greater sense of privacy, it can reduce inhibitions, anxiety, and fears. Immersion in water often helps lower high blood pressure caused by anxiety.<sup>(3)</sup> Warm water is soothing, comforting, relaxing.

**Benefits for Baby**

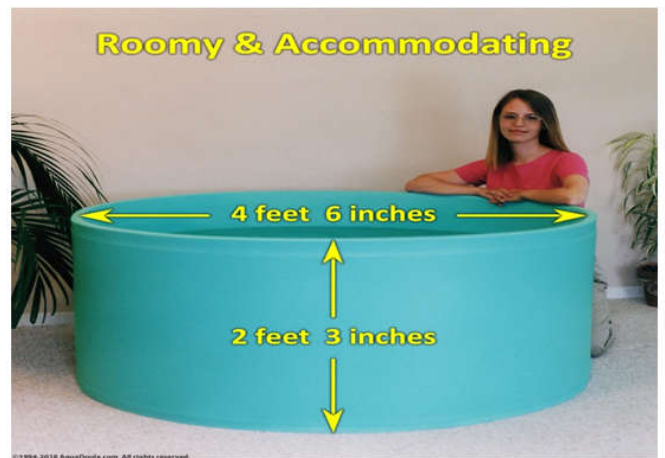
Provides an environment similar to the amniotic sac. Eases the stress of birth, thus increasing reassurance and sense of security.

**Preparation for a Water Birth**

Firstly, you need to prepare your mind examine your own motivations, incentives and expectations for wanting a water birth. Clean the tub with a non-abrasive cleaner, then use 10% solution of bleach and rinse thoroughly.<sup>(4)</sup>

**Water for your Water Birth**

You don't need additives, but a cup of salt per tub will prevent your skin becoming wrinkly and waterlogged. The water temperature to be within 35°C – 38°C.<sup>(6)</sup> Adjust the temperature to your comfort. If the water is too cold, you will lose body heat trying to keep warm, you will become tense if you're shivering and it's thought that cold women don't birth their placentas well. If the water is too hot you'll feel drowsy, overheated, become dehydrated and as it dilates all your blood vessels. Your blood pressure will drop which can make you feel faint and you'll have a greater tendency to bleed after the birth.



**What to Eat and Drink**

Drink to thirst. Ask your partner to remind you to drink at least 300ml of water every couple of hours to avoid dehydration, which can result in fatigue and a poorly functioning uterus. Eating and drinking during labour has been shown to reduce the total length of labour by as much as 90 minutes. Eat light, easily digested food.

**How does the baby Breathe During a Water birth?**

The baby doesn't breathe until after its face leaves the water and its skin comes into contact with the air or it is stimulated. Until then, the baby receives oxygen through its umbilical cord, as it has done during the 9 months of pregnancy<sup>(7)</sup>. As the temperature of water in the tub is similar to that of temperature in mother's womb baby is not stimulated to breathe under water.

### **Anatomical Pros of Water Birth**

The mother has much greater ease and freedom to move spontaneously and to change position. Reduction of pressure on the abdomen. Immersion reduces opposition to gravity; supporting the mother's weight so that her energy can be used to cope with the contractions that promotes deeper relaxation. As a woman relaxes deeply in water, her hormones are released and she starts progressing faster with more rhythm, labour becomes more efficient. Water relaxes the pelvic floor muscles, as it softens the vagina, vulva and perineum leading to fewer injuries to these tissues. Water minimises the pain so effectively for most women that it reduces or eliminates the need for analgesia.<sup>(5)</sup> Water stimulates the touch and temperature nerve fibres in the skin. It blocks impulses from the pain fibres, known as the 'Gate Theory of Pain'.<sup>(10)</sup>



### **Midwives Role**

Assure the temp of the water is suitable for water birth or not. Helps you to get in and out of the pool. Checking your temp, pulse and blood pressure are within the normal ranges or not.<sup>(8)</sup> Keep a check on how often your contractions are coming and encourage you to empty your bladder. Monitor the baby's condition.

### **Meta-Analysis**

Researchers combine data from multiple studies to get stronger evidence. Cochrane researchers combined 11 randomized trials on water immersion during labor and during birth. Eight of these trials only studied water immersion during the first stage of labor (before the pushing phase). The Cochrane reviewers found evidence that labouring in water reduces the use of epidurals and spinal for pain relief<sup>(6)</sup>. They also found that laboring in water shortened the first stage of labor by an average of 32 minutes. There was no evidence of harm to the mother or baby from laboring in water.

### **What are the Risks of Water Birth?**

Overall, ACOG recommends that laboring in water be offered to women who are between 37 weeks to 41 weeks gestation.<sup>(4)</sup> There are other guidelines, including having a low-risk pregnancy, clear amniotic fluid, and baby in head-down position. Water births may not be recommended for women who are in preterm labor or who have had two previous cesarean section deliveries. In addition, water birthing may not be recommended if you have any of the following complications or symptoms: maternal blood or skin infection<sup>(9)</sup>, fever of 100.4 °F (38°C) or higher, excessive vaginal bleeding, difficulty tracing fetal heartbeat, or need for continuous tracing, history of shoulder dystocia, sedation, carrying multiples.

### **CONCLUSION**

Water birth is the promising, safest tool which can be used in the present scenario to protect the health of both mother and baby. It is quite natural process as that of natural birth and posses more advantages than the natural birth and c-section. It is the role of the healthcare personnel to create awareness in public. Mainly unwanted c-sections without any anatomical abnormalities can prefer for water birth, so that the health of both mother and child can be preserved.

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