waterbirth:

a gentle way to gi

Local Yoga practitioner Patricia Grube looks at the advantages of waterbirth and how yoga can increase your confidence and stamina during childbirth.

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The birth of your baby is one of the most important events of your entire life. No event will come close to the wonderment you will feel when you look into your baby's eyes for the first time. Utilising water as a gentle birthing method is a gift that lasts a lifetime! It can optimise your birth experience and help you feel empowered and remain in control of your birth.

The gentleness of the water is phenomenal. Water is, as Barbara Harper R.N., author of Gentle Birth Choices book and video, comments 'like a hundred pair of hands'. The topic of waterbirth has been well researched and documented over the years. French obstetrician Michel Odent was among the first to advocate birthing in water as the ultimate gentle introduction of a baby into the world. The good news is that water birth is more popular than ever and expectant mums in Yorkshire have the choice to use a pool during labour at both Harrogate and York hospitals as well as hiring a pool to use either in hospital or at home,

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A woman wishing to explore this birth option will find resources readily available to learn more about what is involved in a waterbirth. The potential benefits of using the water pool for birth and/or labour are plentiful, from pain relief to general well-being of mother and baby. The chances are very high that you will be able to find a midwife with the experience of delivering babies in water.

When a woman is relaxed, she is able to produce higher levels of oxytocin and other endorphins. This hormone enhances uterine surges and makes them more efficient, which can shorten first stage labour (cervical dilation). But as Dr. Odent explains, entering the bath too early is the most common misuse of the birthing pool. In early labour, the contractions will sometimes space out or stop altogether, so if the mum is already in the pool, she will need to get out and walk to keep the labour established. Labour often progresses quickly when a woman waits until she is in well established labour and her cervix is at least 5 cm dilated before getting into water. Most women do not want to get out once they get in!

For second stage labour, water saturation makes the perineum very pliable thus minimising tearing during this pushing phase. This reduces the need for an episiotomy and the baby's head is delivered slowly and gently.

Another great thing about water pools is the manoeuverability. The buoyancy of the water counteracts the effects of gravity and many of us enjoy the feeling of weightlessness when we float in water. With her body supported in this way, the pregnant woman may find it easier to locate and to maintain comfortable positions in which to relax and to labour. One of our yoga mums, Barbara said, 'Floating is much nicer than standing, walking, or sitting. I was able to easily change to whatever position I needed to in no time at all.'

This buoyancy in water, plus the added warmth to the abdomen and lower back, helps mums stay calm and manage uterine surges. Another Yoga Mum, Angela, noticed the difference with the pain relief provided by water than by land. 'I am pretty sure I would have thought seriously about having an epidural if I hadn't been in the pool.'

For these reasons and more, a woman should be encouraged to use the water pool. Hospitals may vary in their policy for waterbirth but generally the conduct of a water labour and birth is the same in all aspects as a low risk labour and birth on dry land. If you are interested in a waterbirth, speak to your midwife who will perform an assessment to determine your risk level - certain medical conditions can prevent a woman from having a waterbirth.

At Harrogate Hospital, the midwives seemed quite happy and sympathetic to conduct waterbirths for women who are healthy and with uncomplicated term pregnancies. However, as there is only one water pool, it is available on a first come first-serve basis. For homebirths, a woman may wish to hire her own water pool to guarantee availability of a birthing pool.

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ive birth

Again, speak to your midwife about your intentions for a waterbirth.

But despite all the benefits offered by a waterbirth, the midwife I spoke to was quick to point out that in addition to a healthy and normal pregnancy, 'a woman must have the right mindset and realistic expectations of her ability to cope with pain.' Her point is well taken. Although the water can help alleviate labour pain, it does not remove it and entonox (gas & air) is the only analgesic that can be offered whilst in the water.

birth to be active and natural.'

A water birth requires a woman to embody the qualities of water -of going with the flow. Going with the flow means trusting the wisdom of your body and surrendering to the primordial power and allow the birth to unfold. It also means trusting your midwives have your best interest at heart.

Although you may be able to labour in the pool, there may be circumstances that will require you to get out of the pool and deliver on land. Therefore it is important

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This is where the yoga comes in. For women planning a water birth, preparation is of key importance. Practicing yoga during pregnancy is an invaluable tool in helping a woman as she prepares her mind, body, and spirit for the intensity of a natural and active birth. But although it is intense, with the right preparation and mindset, a waterbirth is doable! Yoga can give a woman the confidence she needs to approach labour with a strong spirit, courage, and calm surrender to the birthing process.

My yoga student Hannah told me, 'I managed only with TENS in the early hours on land and then just gas and air in the water. Practicing yoga definitely helped. I was able to use my breath to manage the contractions and to help with the pushing phase. The midwife commented on how flexible I was which allowed me to move about in the pool and to continue using the squats as taught in your class, when I was getting really tired. The midwives at Harrogate Hospital were brilliant, very positive about using water, and for the to not rigidly focus on waterbirth as the 'goal' but rather an alternative means to a goal—a gentle birth for baby!

There is no doubt about it; a baby born into the gentle cradle of water is positively affected by the birth experience. One new mum Jane told me, 'Emily was very calm and happy after the birth. She latched on straight away, slept all through the first night and was a relaxed baby. I think this was due to her calm and unstressed birth.'

There is nothing as wonderful as the comfort warm water offers to a birthing mum. Whether she continues to remain in water and birth her baby there, or simply use the water pool to manage labour, the positive effects are numerous. You can create your own personal miracle of love and empowerment. Safe, gentle, joyous waterbirth is available to you now. What could be more important?

Patricia Grube, Certified Yoga Teacher, teaches pregnancy yoga in Harrogate. www.noplacelikeohm.com, 07875-679754 or 01423-552960.

using homoeopathic remedies for pregnancy

by Drinna Ferrer

Homoeopathy is wonderful during pregnancy as it is non-toxic, safe and effective. Here's the first part of a homeopathy pregnancy special with a few remedies to help ease some of the typical pregnancy ailments.

During pregnancy, it is very important to take good quality nutrition to support your body and the baby's development. It is important to steer clear of certain foods to minimise the risk to the baby and supplementation and medicines all carry warnings asking you to seek the advice of your doctor.

pregnancy sickness

This is caused by high levels of hormones and some believe that it is the body's way of eliminating toxicity for a better environment for the baby.

Try fresh ginger dissolved in hot water or ginger tea with or without lemon. Fennel tea often helps and eating pumpkin and other seeds helps regulate blood sugar levels. It is helpful to avoid cold, sweet, greasy foods and to eat at regular intervals through out the day.

- **Ipecac –** serious nausea, heartburn and excessive flatulence. Excellent for vomiting. Pale face, copious salivation. Nausea worse with rich food and meat. Desires fresh air, rest, cold drink.
- **Lactic acid –** for acidity and vomiting, a lot of exhaustion. Nausea is relieved by eating. Lots of salivation. Hot, burning belching.
- **Nux vomica –** nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and usually a headache like hangover. Sensitive to noise. Will feel toxic. Worse early morning, open air, pressure of clothes. Better for a rest.
- **Sepia –** vomiting with empty feeling in the stomach, relieved by eating. Probably repelled by meat. Tiredness, nausea almost like a hangover. Worse time of day is usually 3-5pm. Will feel better for some exercise.
- **Symphoricarpus Racemosa (Snowberry) –** this is a little remedy that has no other use except for morning sickness, nausea and vomiting. Indifferent to or repelled by food and the smell of food is repulsive. Dry retching. Must lie still.

Use 30C potency for milder conditions and 200C for more severe conditions. Try am and pm for one week or whenever sickness occurs.

aching back

The extra weight and change in posture during pregnancy can lead to some muscle strain and backache.

- **Aesculus hip –** back pain in lower back, worse for walking or stooping. Feels as if back is weak or breaking. Many attempts needed to rise. Walking is nearly impossible.
- **Rhus toxicendron –** pain is bad at the start of the movement, but improves and loosens up with continued motion. Too much exertion, however, will bring back the pain. Worse at night.
- **Kali carb –** pain in the lower back, might shoot down back of the legs. Feelings of weakness in the back. Feels better sitting down.
- **Bryonia –** pain is worse for any kind of movement. Must remain absolutely still. Better for pressure, lying on the back, rest. Stitches and stiffness in the lower back.

Use 6C potency for milder conditions and 30C for more severe conditions. Take am and pm for one week or whenever back hurts.

Avoid staying in one position for too long. Be aware of your posture. Swimming can help relieve pressure from joints. Avoid high heels. A cloth soaked in cider vinegar and left on the back for about 20 minutes can also help.

Drinna Ferrer holds homeopathy workshops as well as running private clinics in York and Harrogate. 05600 433802 www.drinna.com