



# 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.*

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## 1. Purpose

The *Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Policy* (the policy) mandates 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 to ensure a consistent approach across the WA health system.

This policy is a mandatory requirement for Health Service Providers under the *Clinical Services and Planning 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 and monitor compliance with the [Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard](#) which include the following:

- protocols for inclusion and exclusion criteria, including recommending women leave the water if urgent maternal or foetal compromise develops
- responsibilities of the health professional
- training/competency requirements for relevant health professionals (i.e., obstetricians, midwives)
- communication regarding benefits and risks to the women and acquiring informed consent
- assessment of staffing levels and competencies to support water immersion
- infection control and work health and safety requirements
- emergency management

- documentation requirements
- audit and evaluation requirements.

HSPs must record the number of Severity Assessment Code 1 and 2 incidents related to water births and the actions taken to address the recommendations.

#### 4. Compliance Monitoring

The Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office within Clinical and Excellence Division require HSPs to complete the [Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Compliance Audit Tool](#) and to submit an annual report regarding the outcomes of the audit and evaluation to the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office at [CNMO.CED@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:CNMO.CED@health.wa.gov.au) 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](#)
- [Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Compliance Audit Tool](#)

#### 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.
WA health system	The WA health system is comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the Department;</li> <li>(ii) Health Service Providers (North Metropolitan Health Service, South Metropolitan Health Service, Child and Adolescent Health Service, WA Country Health Service, East Metropolitan Health Service, PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA, Quadriplegic Centre and Health Support Services); and</li> <li>(iii) Contracted health entities, to the extent they provide health services to the State.</li> </ul>

## 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](mailto:CNMO.CED@health.wa.gov.au)

## 9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Review date	Amendment(s)
MP 0049/17	3 April 2017	03 April 2022	Original version
MP 0049/17 v.1.0	16 November 2023	November 2026	Policy review with amendments as listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy title amended from “Women requesting immersion in water for pain management during labour and/or birth” to “Water Immersion During Labour and Birth”.</li> <li>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”.</li> <li>Policy purpose updated to align with the policy requirements.</li> <li>Policy requirements updated to require HSPs to develop procedures in line with the <i>Water Immersion During Labour and Birth: Statewide Standard</i>.</li> <li>Compliance monitoring updated to reflect policy requirements.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Policy contact changed from Women’s and Newborns Health Networks Development Officer to Principal Midwifery Officer, Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer.</li> </ul>
MP 0049/17 v.1.1	14 February 2024	November 2026	Amendment as listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
MP 0049/17 v.2.0	13 May 2025	November 2026	Amendments as listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purpose section refined.</li> <li>Policy requirements: bullet points one, four and five refined and updated. Inclusion for HSPs to record SAC 1 and SAC 2 incidents during water immersion births.</li> <li>Related document: Water Immersion During Labour and Birth State-wide Standard-removal of Compliance Audit tool from Appendix. Section 6 updated to reflect compliance monitoring and reference to the Audit Tool.</li> <li>Related document: ‘Water immersion During Labour and Birth Compliance Audit Tool’ a stand-alone mandatory document and updated.</li> <li>Compliance monitoring section updated to reflect the reporting requirements and use of the Water Immersion During Labour and Birth Compliance Monitoring Tool.</li> <li>Definition of WA health system included.</li> </ul>

Note: Mandatory policies that exceed the scheduled review date will continue to remain in effect.

## 10. Approval

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

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