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## Water births reduce obstetric intervention

**Source:** *British Medical Journal* 2004: Early online publication

*Evaluating the impact of water birth on the rates of epidural analgesia and operative delivery in nulliparous women with dystocia.*

Expectant mothers who use birthing pools experience less pain and anxiety during labor, and subsequently require less medical intervention, than those who give birth in a hospital bed, report researchers.

Dr. Elizabeth Cluett, who led the team, said: "We believe that first-time mothers tend to get very stressed, a factor which causes hormonal changes and slow progress during labour." Noting that laboring in water may ameliorate this stress response by aiding relaxation and pain relief, the team studied 99 first-time mothers who suffered from slow-progress labor between January 1999 and December 2000.

Of the 49 women who used a birthing pool, approximately half required an epidural, compared with two-thirds of the women who received standard augmentation. There was also a significantly reduced need for augmentation or any form of obstetric intervention without any evidence of longer labor in the group who gave birth immersed in water than those in the control group.

"Our study shows that, by putting these women in water, we can relax them and ease the pain. We hope that our results will provide women with an option whereby they can give birth without the need for obstetric intervention."

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