

Survey: Waterbirth Options in Ireland 2011

- * Survey advertised at 8pm Tuesday evening
- * Survey closed at 9am Thursday morning
- * 100 respondents reaching quota for analysis after 36hrs. Excess of 12 respondents not included in analysis

Survey was Self-Selecting, Electronic

Advertised on Facebook, Twitter, Parenting Forums (magic mum, boards.ie, rollercoaster, mumstown), and indymedia in “consumer issues”.

Results:

1. What part of Ireland are you living?

North 0%
Northeast 17.0%
Northwest 1.0%
South 10.0%
Southeast 6.0 %
Southwest 5.0%
Midlands 4.0%
East 52.0%
West 5.0%
Other/I don't know 0%

2. Are there facilities in your local maternity hospital for use of water during labour/birth?
(Please select all that apply)

Yes – Bath 27.0%
Yes – Birth Pool 20.0%
Yes – Shower 39.0%
No water options are available at my unit 26.0%
I don't know 15.0%

3. Do you think women should have access to water for pain relief during labour in Irish maternity units?

Yes = 99.0% No = 1.0% I don't know = 0.0%

4. Do you think women should have access to waterbirth in Irish maternity units?

Yes = 92.0% No = 4.0% I don't know = 4.0%

5. Would you like to have the option of using a pool for pain relief during your labour?

Yes = 97.0% No = 3.0% I don't know = 0.0%

6. Would you like to have the option of having a waterbirth in a birth pool available to you?

Yes = 91.0% No = 5.0% I don't know = 4.0%

7. If you have experience of waterbirth or use of water in labour, please share your experience:

“My third child was a waterbirth at home. The pictures speak for themselves, I feel so proud of myself for seeking out this 'alternative' way to give birth. I feel lucky to have dodged the hospital system. On my fourth child I was still filling the pool when he decided to make an appearance so he missed out on a waterbirth but I still relaxed in the pool afterwards.”

“I had a water-birth in 1991 in the UK when they were starting out over there. When I came to Ireland and found I couldn't have one here over 10 years later I was very shocked. No mother would consider having one if it was unsafe and the media controversy in Ireland has now made, as far as I am now aware, Water birth in hospitals not accessible in Ireland, only giving the option of using them for pain relief. It is one of the most natural ways to give birth and I would highly recommend them.”

"Wonderful, every cell in my body said "YES" when I got into the pool. It made the sensations so much more manageable. I was also really able to let go, I wasn't afraid of "making a mess" everywhere!"

"Used a birth pool during my first labour - found it an amazing tool for helping me stay relaxed and also such a relief to my body to be in water floating."

"I laboured in water for a considerable amount of time before getting out and delivering baby."

"I Had a water birth in 2003 at home and it was amazing,I was in labour and it started to get very painful then I got in the pool and it all went away,I felt so light and supported and I loved it.I have been present at my sisters two water births at home and she also found it was a wonderful way to give birth."

"Was in the shower & hated it, made me panic.."

"Had a home birth, and got into bath to ease the pain, it worked, then ended up having baby in bath, great experience."

"i used a bath in the rotunda while in labour...found it the best type of pain relief i used. unfortunately theres only one bath for all ladies in labour..would defo hoose a waterbirth if the option was available."

"First labour, stayed in shower throughout labour. I sat on a birth ball for comfort in the shower. Magic. Whole active labour lasted 4 hours. Not bad for a first time Mum! Highly recommend use of water."

"My contractions had slowed greatly from lying down in bed. Midwife advised shower. It eased the contraction pain considerably while also speeding them up hugely (they were gone to 12-13 mins & came back to 3-4 mins apart after shower)"

"Amazing, instant comfort and relief for a long labour. Most incredibly not a scratch, no tear or stitching with a 4.5kg baby!"

"I gave birth in UHG in October 2008. I was able to use the big bath for pain relief. It was wonderful, I felt really relaxed and was able to move around. However, the midwives were quite uncomfortable, there was frequent fetal monitoring, I was told I could only be in for a limited time and in the end they cut it short for some not very convincing reason. Their anxiety pretty much negated or cancelled out the value of using the pool, which was a real pity."

"I used a birthing pool at home for the labour and birth of my son, (my second child). I loved it. I found the water so soothing and calming. At times even during my advanced labour I nearly fell asleep because I was so relaxed. I had no need for any pain relief. My membranes released in the water about 15 minutes before my son was born. He weighed 9lb 1 oz. He has been a very calm and happy baby since the day he was born. If I were to have another baby I would definitely want to use a birthing pool again."

"I found the bath great at home and hated having to get out to go to hospital."

"used water for pain relief before going to hospital during labour and found it very useful"

"Before I made my way to the hospital, I took hot showers every half hour and did a great deal in easing the pains."

"I laboured in a bath in a Dublin maternity hospital. I was progressing very well and found it very difficult to get out when I felt I had to."

"Used the bath at home in early labour. Found it great. Only got out when felt I needed to get to hospital."

"I laboured in the bath at home and then again in a bath in the delivery area of cumh and found it great. I am pregnant again and would love a waterbirth but it looks like this option is not open to me. I believe the pool in cumh is open for labouring in now though, so thats something."

"Had my second child at home in a pool. Was incredible"

"I have had 2 waterbirths. They were very different to each other. The water definitely helped me birth a large baby with a compound presentation (4.7kg) without any perineal trauma. The other birth was faster and smaller baby but still no perineal trauma. The warm water helps you relax, stay focussed and allows the physiology to happen."

"I used a small pool during my first labour, and the relaxation it allowed me provided a tremendous amount of pain relief. It was certainly the most comfortable time of my labour."

"Both children born at home. For second I spent last part of labour in the pool. Very at ease. Water very relaxing and comforting. During 2nd stage labour I was asked to lift my bum out of the water (DoMiNo midwife holles st) as not allowed to actually give birth in the water. This was a bit of an awkward position but not a problem as only 3 surges in total before baby was completely delivered. Was wonderful to be able to remain in the water afterwards until cord had stopped pulsating. And 5-year-old daughter was able to climb in with us and share this unique moment."

"Two home waterbirths with no pain meds"

"2 homebirths, both waterbirths, next one will be waterbirth all going well:)"

"I had access to water while I was in labour for 3 of my kids in New York."

"water birth was one of the reasons which why i choose to have my last 2 babies at home! There is not this choice of pain management / comfort measure in my local hospital (apart from using bath - for labour only, not birth"

"I had a waterbirth with my second child. It was wonderful, and I experienced very little pain. I felt very fit after the birth as well."

"I have seen women labour and give birth in water. On each occasion the woman reported the water provided an great amount of pain relief."

"As a midwife, the most peaceful births I've ever attended were waterbirths (resulting in the calmest newborns I've ever met)."

"Only using the bath before heading to the hospital and it was lovely."

"I had three homebirth's using birthing pool! The water was an amazing relief during contractions and allowed for great freedom of movement to adopt different positions for labouring and giving birth!"

"I had a pool at home for my home birth - I laboured in it but didn't give birth in it"

"I used a shower during my labour. The shower was quite powerful, plenty of hot water etc., but I did not find it particularly useful for pain relief."

"Waterbirth in UK in a hospital and home birth in Ireland in pool"

"1st birth, just shower - got close to transition, felt a bit unsure of how to cope - asked for gas and air, IM didn't have it, but popped me into the shower and it was GREAT, no further thought of drugs crossed my mind. 2nd labour planned water birth but circumstances went against me - midwife didn't come. Got in after with the baby and it was blissful. It is a deep, deep regret that I didn't get to use it during birth."

"Used water in 2 of my 4 labours - both OP. On first an amazing foreign midwife suggested I use it - I was in early labour on an OP baby. The minute I got in the water I felt more relaxed and in control. Spent ages in the bath and it was fantastic! Unfortunately I got out later and lost the bath - found it a huge difference without the water. When the bath did become available again my new midwife wasn't keen and I didn't think to make an issue of it - her being the professional and all. Felt much more intense and out of control without it. My fourth labour I used shower in my house and then the bath for another OP baby. It was a huge relief!! When I got to hospital I was 9cm so was told it was too late for the bath there..unfortunately due to baby position I ended up having a further 2hrs in transition!! The bath actually would have been a godsend! However at that stage I was too busy trying to get off the bed and avoid AML to even contemplate making a stand for the bath! My hospital has the pools in the MLU but I can't use them as don't qualify for MLU"

"I used the shower for hours during my first labour. I hated coming out of it for checks"

"Homebirth"

"Homebirth"

"I'd a waterbirth (third baby, only homebirth). It was extraordinarily effective. By way of contrast I'd an epidural on both hospital births."

"I labored in my own birth pool at home for my homebirth. It was through NMH. I ended up getting out cause contractions slowed down. When they came back it happened so quickly i actually forgot to get back in. Due to their policy i couldn't have given birth in the water."

"My son was born in a birthing pool, it was an amazing experience, a gentle and beautiful birth , the warm water was so inviting and such a relief, I wish everybody could experience such a lovely birth!"

"I had a water birth at home with the help of an independent midwife. I wasn't in the pool for long as I had a quick labour but the birth was in the pool and it was so gentle and easy. I had no tears despite having a big (10lb10oz) baby which I think was facilitated by the water birth."

8. If you had access to waterbirth or use of water in labour but did not avail of this choice, please share why:

"I had experience of knowing through a friend the woman who lost her baby in the waterbirth in Cavan MLU. Discussion on radio afterwards stated that when a babies cord is compromised while being born they instinctively take the first gasp of air when head is born and hence how this baby drowned. I am not in expert in this area but I do see on You tube some lovely water births. I just think I would feel safer while out of water. The Cavan MLU loss of this baby was very very sad and plays in my mind. I believe it happened in 2006.?"

"Was on constant monitoring during induction so couldn't use water during birth."

"I was terrified I'd slip in the shower, or wouldn't have time to get out & didn't want to deliver in water at all"

"the thought of being in a pool of water during labour does not appeal to me. I had natural childbirths, no epidural and preferred to manage on my own, with the help of the midwife of course."

"Showers were available, but were busy at the time I would have used it!"

"For first baby, had a pool, but labour so fast we didn't even get chance to fill the pool! But it was extremely comforting in the build-up to labour day to know it was there for me."

"I had planned to labour in water at my homebirth (my midwives wouldn't attend me unless I agreed not to deliver in water) but things progressed too quickly for me to make it downstairs to the pool!"

"Think use in Drogheda may have been suspended following a baby death in Cavan"

"I didn't give birth in it as my midwife wasn't comfortable with that."

"see above"

"I found I didn't need the water on second and third - they were both super fast and thanks to hypnobirthing I never really experienced the intensity I did on the two OP babies. As said above, the water made OP bearable...I strongly feel without the water I would have needed pain meds and in the case of last baby, I would have needed to go into the hospital sooner."

"wasnt mentioned while i was in labour- I was in too distracted to think of it at the time"

9. Please share any further comments here:

"The women of Ireland are being denied waterbirths, the obstetrics do not want midwives taking clients away from them and play on womens fears around childbirth and safety, reinforcing the misnomer that hospital birth is safer. Sheila Kitzinger writes "A pool also defines the territory that is under the mother's control, in which she has autonomy, and where she can act with spontaneity".

"question 2 should be divided into 2 separate questions, labour and birth, or reworded completely. women have more chance of using a bath or shower for labour but if they gave birth in either in a hospital there would be a clinical incident form filled. women have little or no option to give birth in water due to the embaro but some option to labour in water if they meet the criteria for low risk normal labour"

"It WORKS as a great form of pain relief. It's cheap, it's clean and it is a natural transition for the baby from womb to world."

"There is a water pool in CUMH but it wasn't in use when I was having my baby (2009). I have since heard it's in use for labour but not birthing, which is crazy. So many other countries use birthing pools successfully and so should Ireland"

"I will not give birth without a birthpool, so will be forced to travel to the north and stay in a hotel close to the hospital for a few weeks before I'm due!"

"Waterbirth can be dangerous. Babies can & do die. Something to consider when mother is arguing what right she should have"

"Would have loved a water birth for my two pregnancies but it was not an option in Dublin"

"Water has been proved as a successful and useful aid for pain relief in labour. It's a no brainer - use of showers, baths, pools should be available in all maternity units in Ireland."

"Would love a waterbirth, as water helped me manage pain - had no epidural on 1st baby would love to manage that again!"

"Facilitating birth pools should be so easy.... If you can set one up in your bedroom, all that stops the availability in hospitals is bureaucracy and protocol?"

"Would have much preferred to stay in water for at least the full labour if not for the birth. I feel that I wouldn't have used an epidural had I been able to stay in the water."

"I feel it is such a shame that my local hospital has a birthing pool but we are not allowed to give birth in it. I am aware a baby died during a waterbirth 5 years ago. Does this mean that there cannot be another waterbirth in an Irish hospital for all eternity ? I am pregnant with my third and last baby so a waterbirth option is now gone for me :-("

"I think it's ridiculous that you aren't allowed to have a water birth in maternity hospitals in Ireland. Not all people feel comfortable giving birth at home and would like this option in the hospitals. I know I personally would avail of water options if I was to have another baby in an Irish hospital."

"Please allow for full use not just first stage!!"

"It's shocking that in Cork you can labour in the birth pool but have to get out of it to actually give birth! Only in Ireland!"

"Such a shame this natural pain relief method isn't available past labouring."

"Although technically the Rotunda provides access to baths and showers in labour, when I requested the use of a bath at 5am while in labour I was told it wasn't a good idea because the bath was near a room where pre-labour women were sleeping, so I couldn't use it because I'd wake them. So technically my hospital offers the use of water in labour, but in reality it may not always be available."

"It is terrible that the only reason women are not facilitated in water birth is that hospital staff are not trained (when they easily could be) this should not determine choice for women , when there would be relatively little cost to hospitals and even of that they would mostly be one-off costs! and saving other cost on other analgesia (with risks/side effects) and creating more satisfaction for labouring and birthing women !"

"Waterbirths are common and safe and available in other countries. I don't understand why they cannot be provided in Ireland - for some reason Irish maternity hospitals seem 'afraid' of them."

"Would love to labour in water. Not sure I would want to birth in water but certainly think the option should be there for those who do want it."

"One important reason I am having another homebirth is because I can't get access to water in the Maternity Hospital near my home. I had my first child there, and was not even allowed to use the shower as a way to relieve pain. I feel that access to at least a

shower would have helped a great deal with pain management and progression of labour.”

“Midwives would want to be specially trained in this area. It should be noted that a lot of countries with excellent obstetric records do not recommend that the baby is actually born underwater, although they encourage the use of pools as a form of pain relief”

“I would love the option of water for pain relief in labour, it would feel natural and would be easier to stand up to speed up labour. I do not like the idea of an epidural though so this would benefit me so much.”

“Keep up the good work...”

“too much fear around waterbirth in Ireland, even amongst midwives who have not seen it during their training :(“

“It's magic, as pain relief and comfort, it's insane to use drugs instead. No idea why the hospitals are so reluctant to learn to work with it. It is our huge loss that this is the case.”

“Please make waterbirth and water for labour options available for all women. Its time that the hospitals started offering mothers and babies REAL options...not ones that are dictated by pharماسutical companies and staff rotations!”

“I 'd would absolutly love the choice to labour and birth in water”

“I cannot understand why waterbirths are not an options in all maternity units. It cannot be because of a tragedy of a baby dying after being born surely, because these tragedies happen all the time regardless of where and how babies are born”