

Water birth effect on newborn 'poorly defined'

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http://www.ObGynWorld.com/international/news/2004/Week_24/Day_2/Water_birth_effect_o.asp

A retrospective review of the literature identifies a series of complications that may be specifically associated with underwater delivery.

Water births appear to be associated with a low but poorly-defined incidence of complications not encountered during land-based births, say researchers, highlighting the need for large, controlled trials in this area.

Although the purported relaxing and pain-relieving effects of water birth are making it an increasingly popular option in the USA, "adverse events, including death," have been associated with the procedure, the team from the Maine Medical Center in Portland, USA, explains.

To identify complications potentially associated with water birth, they conducted an "extensive review" of the medical literature published on the PubMed search engine and analyzed the relevant Cochrane review.

Analysis revealed that the following complications could potentially be associated with water birth: fresh water drowning, neonatal hyponatremia, and neonatal waterborne infectious disease, as well as cord rupture with neonatal hemorrhage, hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy, and death.

Noting, however, that their review failed to identify any "adequately controlled" trials of delivery underwater compared with delivery in air, Pinette et al emphasize the need for "a large collaborative, randomized study" to establish the possible harmful effects of underwater birth on the fetus and newborn infant.