



Labor Tub Use and Care

We use a 100 or 150-gallon Rubbermaid-type tub purchased for exclusive use as a waterbirth tub. Both sizes are about 2 feet deep and 3 feet across, allowing the laboring mom to be completely submerged and buoyant for optimum comfort and pain relief. Since it is plastic with no tubing or small corners, it can be completely cleaned and sterilized. The size and cleanliness of this tub is unmatched in other tubs or Jacuzzis. You receive it at your 37-week appointment. Please do not open the factory-sealed drain plug on your tub!

Needed supplies: You will need to have these supplies ready to use at the birth:

- 1 new, clean garden hose long enough to reach tub
- 1 jug of bleach
- 2-3 pounds of sea salt, and 2-3 pounds of Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate)
- Extra plastic sheeting for floor and for covering the cleaned tub (a vinyl tablecloth works)
- Lots of towels, plus a bathmat if desired
- 2 big pots to heat additional water and/or connection to adequate hot water tank
- Floating thermometer (like in a hot tub - optional, we can judge the temp without it)
- Net, scoop, or strainer for scooping out solid materials (like a fish net or kitchen strainer)
- Optional hygienic birth pool liner; order with your birth kit if desired (makes cleanup easy)
- Lots of fluids to drink

I supply these items:

- Tub, sized according to your height or available space
- Adapter if you need one, for attaching your hose to a sink
- One or two clamps to hold hose/towels in place for you on the sides of the tub

Preparing the tub in the weeks before labor:

Decide where you want the tub and check the nearest sink for a detachable aerator, the type of connector our adaptor fits. Thoroughly clean and scrub the tub as you would a cooking pot, using only non-scratchy materials. Rinse completely and let drain well. Prepare a 20% bleach solution (1 cup bleach to 4 cups water); pour it down the sides of the tub, slosh it around the bottom and let sit 20 minutes. At the same time, pour a 20% solution down your garden hose (this can go into the tub) and let the end that will go in the tub during labor soak in the bottom of the tub for the 20 minutes. If using the towel clamps and a birth ball, those should also be thrown in the tub and rolled around so that the bleach comes in contact with all surfaces. Then rinse tub and dry thoroughly. Rinse hose and then seal the ends to each other. Everything is now ready for use. Turn the tub upside down on a plastic sheet (indoors), and store the hose, ball, and adapter underneath it until needed.

Preparing the tub for labor:

Lay out the plastic sheeting under the tub, or a large rectangular (cheap) waterproof tablecloth with the flannel side up. Insert tub liner if desired. Fill the tub 3/4 to 4/5 full with water at 99-100 degrees F. You probably need to **turn up your water heater** to its highest setting to ensure enough water for your entire labor. Place a bathmat or towel on the floor where mom will get in and out so that she doesn't slip. The tub is most useful during the active parts of labor, rather than at the very beginning, so you probably won't fill it at the first signs of contractions. Covering the top of the tub with plastic sheeting and a quilt can help insulate the tub between dips. The two large pots can be used to boil water to bring the temperature up or if the hot water tank is inadequate.

Laboring in a tub:

Ideally, the tub is used when it will provide the most pain relief and comfort without slowing down labor. The pain relieving qualities must be balanced with the dehydrating and warming effects of the water. The water must be between 99-101 degrees so the baby does not get cold after birth. You may want to alternate your tub time with periods of walking or resting on land. Also, if your water breaks early in labor, I may ask for you to wait to get into the tub until labor is well established. I add the sea salt to the water to provide mild antibacterial action, and Epsom salts for relief from pain, cramps, or rising blood pressure.

Clean-up:

Use a hose to siphon the water into your yard or bathtub drain. It need not be the same one that you used to fill the tub, since you may want to keep the new one for use at another waterbirth! To make cleaning easier, rinse the sides of tub with clean water as you drain it. Remove any solid material that will not go up the hose with a scoop and finish siphoning. When empty, take the tub outside and scrub and disinfect the same way you did to prepare it, (at the same time, disinfect the birth ball and the hose that you used to drain the tub, just as you did before the birth,) then turn it upside down so it stays clean until it comes back to us.