

## **Water Birth Infection Prevention Guidance (01/23/2015)**

In order to protect mothers and their infants it is imperative for healthcare providers to be aware of the potential risk of water birth-associated infections. Providers should communicate this information to expectant parents, as well as information on how best to prevent these infections. In addition, standard processes and procedures should be developed pertaining to water birth so that all healthcare provider types including midwives may best safeguard the health of mothers and newborns in their care. The following guidance has been provided to assist providers in developing site-specific infection prevention procedures.

### **1. Cleaning, Maintenance and Documentation of Birthing Tubs/Spas**

- Disinfect tubs and associated components which are utilized by your facility for water birthing according to instructions provided by the manufacturer. Birthing tubs should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each birth.
  - Tubs that have heating elements and circulating water components (such as jets or other water circulation components) that may be difficult to clean should not be used, in particular, during delivery.
- Maintain recommended water quality of tubs utilized by your facility during water birthing. Water quality measures should be guided by the instructions provided by the manufacturer.
- Assess the risk of the location and storage of the birth tubs when not in use to reduce the potential for contamination and proliferation of microorganisms.
  - Store birth tubs where they will remain dry and free of soil or other environmental debris.
- Create written, facility-specific procedures for cleaning and maintaining birthing tubs and associated components. Procedures should address water safety measures (as indicated by the tub manufacturer) including disinfection, temperature and pH levels during use of the birthing tubs. Maintain logs of approved or acceptable chemicals and the quantity used to disinfect and maintain the water quality of birthing tubs/spas. Additional measures may include:
  - Documenting the date and time the tub was filled and the type of water used to fill the tub (city water, well water, etc.)
  - Use of disposable, one-time-use tub liners
- Retain documentation and logs for cleaning, routine maintenance and proper storage of birthing tubs and ensure all records and logs are kept up to date.
- Provide training to staff on all facility-specific procedures developed for birthing tubs and retain records of employee training.
- In general, healthcare providers and facilities must carefully evaluate the “off-label” use of recreational equipment—such as birthing tanks, tubs and spas—as manufacturers of such equipment are not obligated to provide cleaning and disinfecting instructions appropriate for medical equipment use. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not evaluate recreational equipment for such use.
- A birthing tub that is identified as a possible source of infection for an organism such as *Legionella* should be disinfected via hyperchlorination prior to reuse or removed from use permanently.

## 2. Patient Awareness and Care

- Provide written procedures and guidelines to clients regarding steps which should be followed prior to and during the water birth to ensure a safe environment for birthing. These steps should include when to fill the birthing tub, information on water treatment additives and required amounts, the correct timing for adding chemicals to the birthing tub/spa water and incorrect use of the birthing tub. Filling of tubs prior to labor should be avoided. Documentation that written procedures and guidelines were provided to the client should be included in the midwifery care records.
- Review written procedures with all clients and document acknowledgement of their awareness of the risks associated with deviating from the birthing center's written instructions. Risks to be addressed should include the proliferation of certain harmful microorganisms in improperly maintained water used in birthing tubs, such as *Legionella*, *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Citrobacter freundii*, *Enterobacter cloacae*, *Adenovirus*, *Mycobacterium*, and free living amoebae (*Naegleria* species).
- Follow all rules pertaining to midwifery as detailed in the Texas Administrative Code (Title 22, Part 38, Chapter 831) and the Texas Midwifery Act, practice midwifery in a manner consistent with public health and safety and use universal precautions for infection control. Review problems as identified by other professionals or consumers in the community and act to resolve problems that are identified.

The guidelines provided have been compiled from the following sources. Please refer to these resources and guidance documents for additional information:

- Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities: Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee. CDC Healthcare. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic\\_in\\_hcf\\_03.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic_in_hcf_03.pdf)
- Disinfection of Hot Tubs Contaminated with *Legionella* (CDC). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/downloads/hot-tub-disinfection.pdf>
- *Legionella* and the Prevention of Legionellosis (WHO). Available at: [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/emerging/legionella.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/emerging/legionella.pdf)
- Texas Midwifery Board: Midwifery Rules. Available at: [https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/midwife/mw\\_rules.shtml](https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/midwife/mw_rules.shtml)

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