LABOUR AND BIRTH IN WATER: EVACUATION PROCEDURE

AIM
Successful evacuation of a woman from a birthing pool during labour and / or birth

KEY POINTS

- The midwife must be familiar with and competent in caring for women who choose to labour and/or birth in water.
- The midwife’s posture should be held in a position to maintain the normal curves of the spine.
- It is important to prevent forward bending, twisting or overreaching when caring for a woman in the pool/bath. Avoid leaning for prolonged periods.
- The use of kneeler pads, cushions or a low stool will assist with correct back care.
- Ideal accessibility is being able to gain access on all sides or at least two sides of the pool/bath.
- The woman must be able to demonstrate that she is able to enter and exit the bath/pool without placing herself or anyone else at physical risk of injury.
- Ensure that electrical appliances are not in close proximity to the pool/bath.
- A non-slip mat is appropriate when using a bath.
- Towels or other linen should be on the floor surrounding the pool/bath to reduce the incidence of slipping for all in attendance.
- The partner/support person must be shown how to assist the woman in and out of the pool/bath.
- Ensure that when the woman or her partner are leaving the pool they have towels available to dry themselves first. Attend to any water spillage to minimise slipping.
Evacuation from the pool/bath in an emergency situation

Assess the situation and implement the following steps:

- If the woman is unconscious, initiate emergency procedures immediately to remove the woman safely from the water.
- Maintain the woman's airway in the pool.
- Communicate with the people available, including the support people.
- Call for an ambulance and prepare for immediate transfer to support hospital.
- Assess the immediate environment and prepare for moving the client.
- Avoid rushing, movement should be steady and smooth.
- Where possible use 'minimal handling' to protect both the woman and the staff by using the Evacuation Pod.

Instructions for use of the Evacuation Pod

1. Unroll the evacuation pod, keep the mesh side up and unclip the belts.
2. Push the pod down in the water and under the woman, ensuring the woman’s head is at the V end and the foot straps are in the appropriate position.
3. The woman should be lying centrally on the pod.
4. Secure the straps at the chest and knees and adjust the belts firmly.
5. To remove the woman from the pool there must be 2 people at the head end.
6. Complete the transfer to the floor in several stages (see postures and actions on page 4).

Preparation

Team Member 1
- Support the client’s head/shoulders.

Team Member 2
- Organise priority 1 ambulance to attend.
- Prepare the evacuation pod under the client.
- If necessary assist by climbing in the pool to move pod under client.
Postures and Actions

- Maintain client’s airway with appropriate handhold

- Support clients legs using spoon hold

- Using the bench position, support the sacral area and place board into position

- With the client strapped to the board, position the client using counter balance and backward lunge

- Once in position, both team members at the head end brace elbows and prepare for backward lunge
- Complete the transfer to the floor in several stages, allowing the momentum of the woman’s body weight to assist the completion of this manoeuvre.

**Important Note:**

- Always observe safe manual handling recommendations when transferring a client.
- Regularly check the stitching on the pod especially after each usage. In the rare event of the pod being used it is to be disposed of at the client’s home.

**Manual Handling Standards**

- Reduce the need for repetitive or sustained awkward procedures/postures.
- Reduce the need for sustained movements or application of force.
- Ensure that when handling a load it is stable and balanced before performing a task.
- Do not handle loads which are difficult to grasp or hold, use an appropriate device.

**Education**

Staff education and training will be attended to annually and as part of the new staff orientation program in conjunction with a manual handling skills drills and a review of the teaching DVD provided by CMP.

**Documentation**

- Document incident and actions taken clearly in the birth book (CMP MR 08)
- Notify on-call manager of incident.
- Complete a clinical incident form (CIF).

*Developed in consultation with Sally Adam - Manual Handling Consultant KEMH*
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Do not keep printed versions of guidelines as currency of information cannot be guaranteed. Access the current version from the WNHS website.