

Pool Setup and Cleaning Recommendations

Definitions

Biofilm: A thin, slimy film of bacteria that adheres to surfaces that are in regular contact with water. This can develop in any place where there is water, especially stagnant water - in pipes, overflow drains, shower heads, jets, etc.

Blackwater: Wastewater containing feces, urine and flush water from flush toilets, anal cleansing water or toilet paper.

Cleaning: The necessary first step of preparing the pools. The physical action of scrubbing with detergents and surfactants and rinsing with water removes large numbers of microorganisms and debris from surfaces. If the surface is not cleaned before disinfecting, the process is compromised.

Components: Birth pool, pump, hose, adaptors, liners

Critical Item: Any item that enters sterile tissue or the vascular system. If not sterile, there is a high possibility of infection. For example - needles and some instruments.

Decontamination: Removes pathogenic microorganisms from objects so they are safe to handle, use or discard.

Disinfection: The necessary second step of preparing the pools to be used safely. A process that eliminates many or all pathogenic microorganisms on inanimate objects.

Dwell Time: The amount of time a disinfectant must be in contact with a surface to kill the microbes. All disinfectants are tested and labeled for the specific amount of time.

Graywater: Wastewater streams generated from households or office buildings other than the wastewater from toilets. Sources of graywater include sinks, showers, baths, clothes washing machines or dishwashers.

Non-critical Item: Any medical item that comes in contact with intact skin. Sterility of these items is not critical. For example - stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, etc.

Pools: Considered part of a midwife's equipment, but they are not a medical device.

Sanitization: The process of cleaning and disinfecting.

Semi-critical Item: Any medical item that comes in contact with mucous membranes or non-intact skin. Some bacteria present on these items will not be harmful. These items should be cleaned and disinfected or discarded. For example - doppler, pool liner, pool.

Water Immersion: A depth of water which ensures the mother's belly and bottom to be submerged fully in water while she sits or kneels. Water immersion creates a buoyancy effect and produces hormonal changes which enhance labor. After approximately 30 minutes, the body releases an increase of oxytocin which lasts approximately 90 minutes.

Pools

Recommended Birth Pools and Components

- Portable pools designed and manufactured for use as birth pools for which the manufacturer has provided cleaning and disinfecting instructions. These pools should be used with liners.
- Examples include: Birth Pool in a Box, La Bassine, AquaBorn, etc.

- Single-use disposable pools such as Passages and Oasis Pools.
- Pools with removable jets and a pipeless system. Examples include: Sani-jet.
- The pool should be deep enough for water immersion.

Pools Not Recommended

- Pools/tubs with piped recirculating water systems of any type that have heaters, jets and/or overflow drains that cannot be easily cleaned. These features may harbor biofilms.
- Examples include Spa-in-a-Box, Soft Tub, garden tubs in client's home.
- Client's home baths are not recommended for two reasons 1) recirculating and heating systems in the tub are a place where biofilm develops, and 2) the bath may not be deep enough for water immersion. If the client's home bath is used for water labor or water birth, clean and disinfect the tub. A pool liner is highly recommended.

Portable Pools

Setting up

- Clean and disinfect the pool before installing the liner and after use.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved tuberculocide disinfectants.
- Fill pool when midwife arrives.

Filling the Pool

- Allow the hot water to run for 3 minutes before filling the pool. This clears the hose and pipes of stagnant water and sediment.
- Do not use gray water or recycled water to fill the birth pool.
- Municipal water is generally considered safe if not left in the pool for more than 6 hours.
- Well water is generally considered safe if not left in the pool for more than 6 hours. Make sure the water has been tested within the past year. (Most private well owners know about this.)
- If you are refilling the pool, use a new liner if there is visible contamination.

Emptying the Pool

- Dispose of all debris - blood clots and feces.
- Use a submersible or external pump.
- Empty blackwater into toilet.
- Dispose of liner, debris net, etc.
- Clean and disinfect all semi-critical and non-critical items used in the birth pool, especially if they have come in contact with blackwater.

Storage

- Store according to manufacturer's instructions and where the pool will remain dry and free of soil or other environmental debris.

Non-portable Pools

Setting up

- Disinfect pool before filling.
- Use a disposable liner if you have a jetted pool.
- Run hot water for 3 minutes before filling the pool.

Emptying the Pool

- Dispose of all debris - blood clots and feces - before it can flow into the drain pipe.
- Empty the pool every 6 hours.
- If you are going to refill the pool for the same client and there is visible contamination, clean and disinfect pool.