

Aquabirths ~ Baths for labour and birth

Cleaning guidance

Cleaning of Aquabirths baths.

The key point for cleaning an Aquabirths bath is that it should be cleaned in the same way as any plastic bath. It should be cleaned in line with pre-existing hospital cleaning and infection control policy and guidance with the exception of the warning given below.

The following advice must be followed:

The cleaning of this bath must avoid the use of scouring or abrasive cleaning agents (whether scouring pads or cream-cleaners or powders) and any solvents such as acetone. Use only soap and water or the sanitizing agents mentioned below or similar.

The following is guidance only: local specialists and Infection Control professionals may formulate their own protocols. Aquabirths can, on request, provide information on suppliers and other general information on the cleaning of the bath.

Some cleaning guidelines:

Rinse, wash with detergent and then sanitize.

- After use, the bath should be rinsed and cleaned of visible contamination. This can be scooped out or flushed out with running water
- Wash the bath with a general detergent and then rinse. Do NOT use any scouring cleaning products
- Next, treat the bath with a sanitizing agent, please ensure that all surfaces are cleaned and that attention is paid to the bath waste.
- Following treatment, the bath should be rinsed clean with plenty of water to remove all chemical residues.
- Any residual water can be mopped up.
- Any other fixtures and fittings can be treated with the same spray solution. Please check any special instructions for equipment that may have come from other suppliers (taps, etc) as they may have their own cleaning procedure.
- Prior to use rinse the bath to remove any residues. *If* the water system is part of a non-circulating system, run taps for about two minutes to remove any water standing in the pipes.

Suggested Cleaning Products.

- Aquabirths has used cleaning powder containing Sodium dichloroisocyanurate (NaDCC) for several years and found it to be highly effective. The cleaning products will be supplied with the relevant instructions and dilution rates. An alternative proprietary brand is Ecolab ActiChlor. Another product commonly used within the health sector is Ecolab MicroChlor, though this is not a NaDCC-based sanitizer but rather a Sodium Hypochlorite-based (bleach) one.
- Dilute solutions of sanitizer can be made up in a spray bottle to form part of a daily cleaning regime for the bath. (Bleach based cleaners should be prepared fresh.)
- In addition, the soaking of the waste area should form part of the long-term cleaning regime of the bath. A solution of Actichlor or Microchlor should be made up to a concentration of not less than 10g/L (10,000ppm). This can then be poured into the waste and allowed to stand for not less than 30 minutes and then flushed with copious water. Should the need arise, the central section of the valve unit can be unscrewed, removed and soaked.

The products here are suggested and the hospital may substitute as they deem fit.

Use of the bath

It is not the purpose of these instructions to teach the obvious: people know how to fill baths. We do have a few pointers to contribute to the formulation of a policy for the safer use of the bath.

A thorough cleaning regime is vital to make sure the bath is always ready for use. Some hospitals prefer to start the tap running and give the bath a quick rinse.

Other equipment you will find useful: plastic sieve & 'water-scoop' thermometer.

Within the side hatchway, you will find a large valve with an orange handle. To close the valve and keep the water in the bath, this handle needs to be turned so that it is at right angles to the line of the pipe. Some hospitals feel that this action warrants an assessment from Health and Safety concerning bending and lifting. Should there be concerns about kneeling to operate the valve, a small kneeling pad stored inside the hatch may be useful.

The time taken to fill the bath depends on the water system and the taps chosen. Do try it out so that you know exactly how long it takes.

Please do not leave a filling bath unattended. Birthing baths are not allowed to have an overflow for hygiene reasons.

A woman entering or leaving the bath should always be assisted in so doing.

Filling depth: approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ full

Temperature: the consensus view is that, *within certain parameters*, the mother should choose a temperature comfortable to her (Geissbuehler V, Eberhard J, Lebrecht A. Waterbirth: water temperature and bathing time - mother knows best! *J Paediatr Med* 2002; 30:371-8.) Moreover, the Trust may already have its own policy on water temperature during labour and birth in water.

Emptying the pool. When the pool has been used, larger 'birth products' can be sieved out of and disposed of in line with the hospitals practices. The valve can be opened by turning the handle so that it is in line with the pipework. Smaller soft debris such as clots of approximately 20mm can pass through the valve and trap. The emptied bath should be rinsed immediately or as soon as is practicable and the cleaning procedure begun.

(If an emergency evacuation of the pool is required, consider using the buoyancy of the water to assist rather than emptying the pool, which takes time and leaves the semi-conscious or unconscious woman as 'deadweight'.)

If you have not already been on one, a water birth study day led by Diane Garland is also recommended.