



Water Birth: A Midwife's Perspective

Susana Napierala

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As women increasingly seek more humanistic birthing methods than the hospital-based delivery, certified midwife Susanna Napierala suggests that water birth offers mother and infant the ideal circumstances for beginning their lives together. Warm water, explains the author, reduces the hours and stress of labor, offers bodily support and relaxes blood flow, helping to ease the baby's journey. The baby makes its transition to breathing air in a familiar, gentle medium. Avoiding the didactics of ideology, Napierala infuses her eloquent text with answers to commonly-asked questions: How does the baby breathe underwater? What about complications or infections? For whom is water birth a viable choice? How does a couple prepare for it? *Water Birth* guides the reader through the details of parental and midwife preparation, labor, and birth, noting danger signals that must be heeded. Here is a wealth of solid information, personal testimony, and instruction for those who make this choice.

Giving birth is one of life's most enriching, yet emotionally and physiologically stressful experiences. Faced with the dehumanizing mandates of the medical establishment, women increasingly seek alternatives to hospital birth. In her carefully presented book, Susanna Napierala, midwife to more than 600 births over 18 years, suggests that giving birth in water offers mother and infant the ideal circumstances for beginning their lives together.

Recognizing that this birthing approach is not yet widely practiced in the United States, Napierala readily acknowledges the commonly-asked questions: How does the baby breathe underwater? What about complications or infections? What specifically makes water birth a viable choice, and for whom? How do a couple and their chosen midwife prepare for water birth? Avoiding ideological didactics, the author cautions that, regardless of a couple's expectations of the birth experience, every pregnancy's priority should be a healthy mother and baby. As she details aspects of parental and midwife preparation, labor, and birth, Napierala counsels vigilance, noting possible difficulties and danger signals that must be heeded. For midwives, their assistants, pregnant women and their families considering birth options, *Water Birth* offers a wealth of solid information, personal testimony, and guidance for those who make this choice.

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Arthur Lee:

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Mary Kidd:

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Alan Sarno:

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