

# BIRTHING

A NEWSLETTER OF ALTERNATIVE BIRTHING PRACTICES

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

MAY/JUNE 2001

## GOING WITH THE FLOW: USING WATER IN LABOR AND BIRTH

### *Deborah Craig*

At five months pregnant and counting, every time I step into a nice warm bath my mind inevitably floats to the day I will birth this new baby. Ever since I attended my first water birth three year ago, I knew that if I was fortunate enough to have another child, water would be essential. Water has always been soothing to me. Growing up with 5 brothers, my bath time was a retreat from the usual household activity. While my brothers had to bathe two or three at a time, I was allowed complete privacy and solitude. In college I would often do homework in the bathtub, adding more hot water every time I started to cool off. Now baths are often the soothing end to a long work day. In the early days as mommy to my now 7 year old daughter, baths were a pleasure we shared. To hold her, slippery wet and weightless, in the warm water was pure bliss for both of us. And now she, too, has learned the art of bathing. For her every bath must be complete with lavender oil, her special sponge and a candle burning softly nearby.

Because water is so soothing to many of us, it seems natural that it would also be soothing in birth. Many women, when they experience menstrual cramps or just a stressful day use the bath tub to relieve tension (Calgon . . . take me away!). Water has a comforting effect, perhaps left over from our memory of the womb. In warm water muscles seem to melt and tension in the body slowly drains away. Just hearing the sound of running water can be relaxing (think how popular fountains are!) And many people know how just gazing out on a body of water seems to quiet the mind and calm the body. Soft muscles, tension draining from the body, relaxation, a calm and quiet mind - all things we would love to see birthing Moms experience in labor.

Now that more and more women are choosing water as a part of their birth experience and now that

*Childbirth is more admirable than conquest, more amazing than self-defense, and as courageous as either one.*

caregivers are recognizing the benefits themselves, we have a lot more information documented as to the benefits of water in labor and birth. (see sources following this article for just a few) Many women report that once they settle into the warm water, their contractions actually hurt less and they feel less pressure on the abdomen. Women naturally feel less anxiety if they have decreased pain and that, in turn, also causes adrenaline levels

to decrease. Using water in labor has shown to increase the natural levels of oxytocin (the hormone which makes the uterus contract) and endorphins (natural pain relieving substance produced by the brain) and to lower blood pressure. As a result, the labor usually progresses better.

Because women experience relative weightlessness in water, they can reposition their bodies more easily. The mother has much greater ease and freedom to move spontaneously and to change position to widen the pelvis and assist the descent of the baby. Experiencing buoyancy, she reduces the opposition to gravity and as a result, expends less energy. This leaves the mother with more energy to deal with contractions. Warm water

*(Continued on page 2)*

## YOUR THOUGHTS?

*Birthing* is looking for submissions from all of you out there in the birthing community. I would love to hear from you, whether you are a midwife, doula, childbirth educator, or one of the mothers and fathers we serve.

Anything is acceptable and everything may be published, from letters to articles to poems. Send submissions to...

**BIRTHING: SUBMISSIONS  
C/O JULIE SAMMS**

**P.O. BOX 3107**

**BELLINGHAM, WA 98227**

or E-mail us at...

**BIRTHING@HOTMAIL.COM**

(Continued from page 1)

helps to soften the tissues of the pelvic floor allowing them to relax and stretch more easily. The incidence of perineum tearing decreases which means less post-partum discomfort for the mother.

Local couples considering waterbirth have several choices. Here in Whatcom and Skagit Counties, we are fortunate to have several homebirth midwives who are experienced and comfortable with water birth. Our local hospitals allow women to use water tubs in labor; however, they are not allowed to birth in the tubs. Most couples considering water birth usually have lots of questions. They should always be encouraged to talk with their caregivers as practices may vary, but here are some of the "basics:"

- **What about the baby taking its first breath?**

According to the "experts", newborns have a "mammalian reflex," which means that they will not take their first breath while underwater. Newborns will take their first breath when they are exposed to the cool, dry air. The baby goes from the fluid-filled environment of the womb, into the birth canal, then into the warm water of the tub. Immediately, the baby is brought out of the water and into arms of its mother. The baby will then take its first breath of air. The umbilical cord is still attached and the baby is still getting oxygen from its mother during the whole birth process.

- **How long is the baby left in the water?**

Most caregivers will want to bring the baby to the surface immediately to promote breathing on its own. This procedure is highly recommended by water birth experts.

- **Is there risk of infection from the water? After all, if the mother is in there for some time passing body fluids, can't bacteria be passed on to the baby?**

The baby has been exposed to the mother and the home environment (providing we are talking home birth here) for the entire time it is in the womb. Infection isn't really a problem; the mother and baby share the same anti-bodies. During labor everything is moving down and out. The baby is descending into the birth canal. It does not make sense that bacteria from the water would go up into the uterus. In fact, the concentration of bacteria in and around the vagina is actually diluted by the water, lessening the possibility of infection. It's highly recommended that the mother use a pool that comes with a brand new disposable liner that no one else has used, so there is no risk of cross contamination. The only precaution is to make sure that the water for bathing is clean. Regular tap water is usually sufficient. It is general practice to

change the water if it has been in the pool for more than 24 hours.

(For extra reassurance note this: a case study at John Radcliffe hospital, Oxford U.K. where they have had over three hundreds water births reports not one case of infection. Compare that to the 25% of women and babies who get infections in 'land' deliveries in some hospitals)

How can the father (or labor support person) participate in the birth if the woman is in the tub?

The tub does create some challenges for father or labor support person. With the tub separating you, it is hard to be physically close to the birthing mother. Often times in a water birth the mother is quite self-sufficient and may not need a lot of physical touch. However, many birth tubs are big enough for two adults. Sometimes a Dad-to-be will put on swimming trunks and join the mom in the tub as long as that is comfortable. She can also get into a hands and knees position, allowing the belly to hang down weightless in the water while the father or doula applies pressure to her back. The thing is, you just work with it. If she is happy and content to stay in the tub, your focus may be on the encouraging words you speak to her.

Using water in labor and birth provides yet another choice for birthing women. Whether in the home, birth center or hospital setting, water can provide pain relief and relaxation. The benefits of using this natural element in one of life's most profound experiences are endless.

SOURCES:

Articles: *Mothering* magazine, NOV/DEC 2000  
*Midwifery Today* magazine "Waterbirth Issue"  
Summer, 2000 # 54

Websites: [www.sheliakitzinger.com/WaterBirth](http://www.sheliakitzinger.com/WaterBirth)  
[www.birthbalance.com](http://www.birthbalance.com)  
[www.waterbirth.org](http://www.waterbirth.org)  
[www.nurturing.ca/waterbirth](http://www.nurturing.ca/waterbirth)

Books:

Waterbirth: A Midwife's Perspective, Susanna Napierala

Water Birth: The Concise Guide to Using Water During Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy, Janet Balaskas and Yehudi Gordon

We Are All Water Babies, Jessica Jackson and Michael Odent

# LOCAL EVENTS

## MARCH 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				1	2	3
4	5	6		8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Also March 13th:  
Midwifery info  
night 7pm @  
Skagit Co-op

Hypnobirthing  
info night  
1155 N. State St  
RM 417 @ 6pm

La Leche League  
10 am @  
Garden Street  
Family Center\*

La Leche League  
7:30pm @  
Brenda's  
home\*\*

## APRIL 2001

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Also April 17th :  
La Leche League  
7:30 pm @  
Brenda's  
home\*\*

\*Garden St. Family Center 1231 N. Garden St. (Garden & Holly)

\*\*Call 398-1741 for information

\*\*\*Across the parking lot from the Community Food Co-op 1220 N. Forest (Forest & Holly)

If you would like to put an event on the calendar please  
contact Julie @ 360-715-1795 or e-mail  
[birthing@hotmail.com](mailto:birthing@hotmail.com)

# RESOURCES

ADOPTION		CLASSES		CHILDBIRTH	HEALTH CARE	ACUPUNCTURE
Adoption Resource Library	733-6714	Apple Tree Childbirth Education	676-2526	Christian-based	David Adich	(DC, LAc)734-9555
Adoption Support Group	671-3093	Becoming Parents, Staying Partners	676-2443		Paula Brown	(LAc) 734-9500
Bethany Christian Services	733-6042	B'ham Technical College	738-0221		Darcy Elliot	(LAc) 647-0228
International Child Adoption Ntwk.	738-8251	Deborah Craig	738-9015		Mystique Grobe	(ND, LAc)715-9010
Nancy Berg, Atty	714-6188	Tricia Griffin	733-8086 (Bradley)		Heidi Hawkins (pediatric & allergy)	676-5477
Debra A. Lev PS	671-7065	Brooksana Raney	758-2555		Dennis Littleton	(ND, LAc)676-5337
<b>BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT</b>		Transitions	734-1414		Jack Shupe	(LAc) 733-1693
<b>BREASTFEEDING</b>		Judie Zersen	715-2020 (Bradley)		Michele Siemion	(LAc) 715-9010
La Leche League	595-2403 Terry 988-4086 Angela 592-5052 Pam 647-3507 Heather 715-2020 Judie 354-8278 Suzanne	Aryn A. Whitewolf aidU2relax@aol.com	758-9854	Hypnobirthing@	<b>HEALTHCARE CHIROPRACTO</b>	
Women, Infants & Children (WIC)	738-2505 or 384-1633	Markaye Maionczynski	647-8601	Hypnobirthing@	Robert B. Bates, DC Free Cranio-Sacral Therapy <1month old	398-7466 kvr@b@aol.com
<b>BREASTFEEDING LACTATION CONSULTANTS</b>		<b>CLASSES EXERCISE</b>			Advid Adich, DC, LAc	734-9555
Kathleen Auerbach, IBCLC, PhD	384-1755 The Parent Center	Prenatal Yoga-Plus & Yoga Moms	647-0712	Maureen Braun	Jim Ballif, DC	650-0997
Jeanne Brotherton, RNC, IBCLC	758-9561	Whatcom Family YMCA	733-8630		Will Cummins, DC	715-9010
Barbie Jimenez, RN, IBCLC	647-1544 Mother/Baby Homecare	<b>CLASSES PARENTING</b>			Lindon Keeler, DC	715-9010
Holly Telfer, RN, IBCLC	715-4170	B'ham Parks & Recreation	676-6985		Cherrellyn Seegers, DC	715-9010
Judie Zersen, IBCLC, CLE	715-2020 Breastfeeding Success	B'ham Technical College	738-0221		<b>HEALTHCARE COUNSELORS</b>	
<b>CHILDCARE RESOURCES</b>		Ferndale Parks & Recreation	384-5113		Catholic Community Services	676-2164 or (800) 300-2493
B'ham Community ChildCare Center	676-0950 (Sliding Fee Scale)	Infant & Child Massage	733-6560	Christin Nelson	Anji Citron, MSW, CSW	676-2443
The Birches Headstart & Childcare	734-8396 or 384-1470 x 415	Partners in Parenting	676-2443	Anji Citron	Alexandra Hall Coy, M. Ed.	650-1591
Opportunity Council Childcare Resources	734-5121 x 227	<p><i>Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.</i></p>				
Dept. of Social & Health Services	714-4000					
Parent Cooperative Preschools	676-2170 x 338					
					Jillian Froebe, MA, ATR	738-4805
					Djuna W. Harper, ARNP	714-9574
					Naomi Rudo, MA, MFT	734-0592
					Whatcom Counseling & Psychiatric Clinic	676-8455 or 384-3100

# RESOURCES

HEALTHCARE	DOULAS	HEALTHCARE	MASSAGE CONT	SUPPLIES	BIRTH BALLS
Melissa Denmark Sumas	599-9157 melissa.denmark@gte.net	Catriona Munro	734-1560	Sharon Souders	738-6915
Janna Sanabrina Bellingham	647-3604 lionessjds@gte.net	Cheryl Roberts	734-1560	<b>SUPPLIES</b> <b>BIRTH TUBS</b>	
Julie Samms Bellingham	877/576-3038 toll free juliesamms@hotmail.com	Cindy Sabol	715-9495	Deborah Craig	738-9015
Holly Schutza Friday Harbor	378-3316 schutza@interisland.net	Joanna Schmidt	715-9010	Pamela Aube	592-9018
Megan Bottomley Everson	988-6704 risingmoonfarm@msn.com	Sharon Souders	738-6915	Birth & Beyond	206/324-4831
Amy-Emler Shaffer Friday Harbor	378-9426 denamorg@interisland.net	<b>MEDICAL</b> <b>MIDWIVES</b>		Aqua Doula	800/882-7864
Charity Cook Bellingham	756-2337 unitedonelove@hotmail.com	Ann Tive, LM	734-2182	<b>SUPPLIES</b> <b>DIAPER</b>	
Laurie Gallo Orcas Island	376-4490 opalclt@rockisland.com	Winni McNamara, ARNP, LM, CPM,	734-9500 or 766-6686	Cascade Laundry	734-4200
Sharon Souders Bellingham	738-6915	Judy Edmunds, CH, RNC, CPM, LM (OR)	647-1220	<b>SUPPLIES</b> <b>HERBAL</b>	
Nancy Simmers Bellingham	671-5685	Leslie Gesner, LM	966-0314	Community Food Co-op	734-8158
Brooksana Raney Bellingham	758-2555	Barbara Schickler, CNM, ARNP	671-4944	Good Earth Nutrition	733-2211
Jessica Wight Bellingham	738-3536	Susan Willis, CNM, CFNP	671-3345	Terra Organica	715-8020
Sharon Avolio Bellingham	738-1776	Peggy Franklin, CPM	856-2161	Wonderland Teas & Spices	733-0157
<b>HEALTHCARE</b> <b>HERBALISTS</b>		<b>MEDICAL</b> <b>NUTRITION</b>		<b>SUPPLIES</b> <b>LACTATION</b>	
Judy Edmunds	647-1220	Apple A Day Medical Nutrition Therapy	676-1585	Sonia Enterprises Ana Pillow	647-1979
Suzanne Nagler	354-6334	Tracy Delaney, PhD, RD	738-2830	Mother Baby Homecare	647-1544
Linda Quintana	733-0157	Judy Edmunds, CH, RNC, CPM, LM (OR)	647-1220	<b>SUPPLIES</b> <b>SLINGS</b>	
Amy Sothman	715-8123	St. Joseph's Hospital Nutrition Therapy	715-6420	Mother Baby Homecare	647-1544
Bonnie Sprague	756-9793	<b>PHYSICIANS</b> <b>NATUROPATH</b>		Sharon Souders	738-6915
<b>HEALTHCARE</b> <b>MASSAGE</b>		Mystique Grobe, ND, LAc	715-9010	Judie Zerzen	715-2020
Susan Adich	734-9555	Dennis Littleton, ND, LAc	676-5337	<p><b>I would like to thank Sharon Souders and the <i>Birth in Bellingham</i> group for making their database available to me and making this wonderful resource directory possible!</b></p>	
Elizabeth Brown	676-8274	Laura Shelton, ND	734-1560		
Judy Edmunds	647-1220	Mark Steinberg, ND	738-3230		
Sarah Love	733-0887	Joseph Wessels, ND	734-9500		
Claire Lynam	733-4011				

**If you provide a birth related service and would like to be listed in this resource directory please call Julie @ 360-715-1795 or e-mail [birthing@hotmail.com](mailto:birthing@hotmail.com) and I will contact you.**

# CRANIO-SACRAL THERAPY FOR NEWBORNS

**ROBERT B. BATES, D.C.**

I feel it is very important to get off to a good start in this life. Cranio-Sacral Therapy is a powerful healing approach that helps ensure a good start. Cranio-Sacral Therapy releases birth-related tensions throughout the baby's body using a very gentle touch of a few grams (at most.) This is absolutely safe for the baby. As you know, many births can be very involved and even somewhat traumatic. In the birth process the baby is subjected to intense pressure and constrictions. This can be a first massage or spinal and cranial adjustment, or it can leave a harmful mark on the baby's structure, physiology, and emotions. Most babies are quite healthy and need only a little Cranio-Sacral Therapy; an infant's remarkable pliability and healing ability balances out most of the birth stresses--but not all of them. For example, during birth the bones of the skull compress so the baby can pass through the relatively small birth canal. Afterward tissue memory should bring the head back to a normal, healthy shape within a few hours or day or two. However tissues can become overstressed so that the cranium may not normalize and the baby is faced with long-term problems. It is important to correct these problems as soon as possible. Most babies do not have traumatic births, yet even normal births can cause problems in a young body. For instance, many colicky babies have chronically tight muscles in the upper neck, probably as a result of birth trauma. This creates a compression on the nerves and arteries that come out of the skull into the neck and torso. Of these structures, the vagus nerves are particularly important. Because the vagus nerves supply many of the organs--including those of digestion--there is a strong correlation between colic and this upper neck tension. A simple cranial technique called a cranial base release can often release the compression to allow normal digestion (and normal sleeping and less crying.)

What happens in a birth can affect the entire family; it can create long term problem issues or shift family dynamics in a way few other experiences can. Two examples from my own family illustrate this. My cousin Duane's delivery started before the doctor got to the birthing room. Even though his delivery had already started, the nurse was nervous and didn't think it should proceed without the presence of the doctor. She slowed down his natural delivery by pressing on his forehead. With the force of his Mother's contractions meeting the barrier of the nurse's scared, implacable hands, something had to give--in this case it was Duane's cranial structure. Sadly, the result for my cousin was cerebral palsy; he turned out to have quadriplegia with severe speech impairments. Though he was quite intelligent, he spent 40 painful years in a wheelchair. We now know that one of the causes of cerebral palsy can be an over-ride of the parietal bones by the frontal bones--exactly what it sounds like my cousin had. I believe that good cranial work--had it then been available--would have vastly improved, or even prevented his cerebral palsy. The bones could have been

gently repositioned to their natural location. Finding and balancing such structural misalignments early can make a vast difference later in life. A less serious example, one with a happy ending, involved my nephew Dustin. He wasn't able to latch on and nurse after his birth. Twenty-eight hours went by and he still hadn't nursed. I knew it was important for him to start nursing quickly or he would become a bottle-fed baby. Examining him, I found in his jaw to be misaligned and tight. After I released it he began to nurse within 30 minutes. Though it was a seemingly small shift--a little bit of jaw tension released--it made a big difference for Dustin and my whole family. For the last 3 or 4 years I have offered free exams and treatments of newborns using Cranio-Sacral Therapy. Please call if you would like me to work with a new baby you know. My number is (360) 398-7466. There are others who also do this work on infants also. You could search the yellow pages. Healers of many diverse fields administer Cranio-Sacral Therapy: This includes Osteopaths, Chiropractors, Massage Therapists, Physical Therapists, Nurses and many others. Most Cranio-Sacral Therapy practitioners will mention it in their ads. You might also call the Upledger institute for a referral to local practitioner trained by that particular institute. You can reach them at 1-800-233-5880 or [www.upledger.com](http://www.upledger.com).

## **Some Benefits of Cranio-Sacral Therapy for Newborns**

- Offers a gentle noninvasive intervention for soothing the tensions and trauma often associated with birth.
- Encourages the bones and membranes of the skull and face to release and relax into their proper positions.
- Releasing tension in the upper neck/occipital area (a very common post-birth finding) can help such diverse states as colic, agitation, sleeping difficulties, and behavioral problems later in childhood.
- Can adjust or release the hard palate, vomer and TMJ to facilitate nursing.
- Can prevent many problems in the neck and spine, such as spinal twists and neck tension.
- Can reduce or relieve the trauma often associated with forceps, suction, or C-section deliveries.
- Helps integrate the various bodily systems into a harmonious whole.
- Many parents report calmness and reduced fussing for extended periods after a treatment.

# UPDATE

## *Julie Samms*

Greetings!

Well here we are at issue number three. I'm amazed at the positive response I've received from the community. Even though I haven't heard from most of you I know you're out there because I had to print twice as many newsletters last month.

When I started Birthing I wasn't sure how it would evolve but we seem to be growing at a tremendous rate. I wanted to touch base with you, my readers, and let you know where I am sitting.

- Discussion group - The discussion group on Jan. 30th was awesome! Thank you to everyone who came and joined our circle. And a special thank you to Robert Bates who came and demonstrated Cranio-Sacral therapy! We will be hosting the next discussion group sometime in May. If you have something you would like to share with the group or a topic you would like to address please e-mail or call me @ 360-715-1795.
- My Trip to The Farm - Yes, as of February 20th my entire family will say goodbye to Bellingham for two months and take an old fashioned road trip to The Farm in Tennessee. I will be spending a month training with The Farm Midwives and exploring their commune in south-central Tenn. I am looking forward to this trip as both a physical and spiritual cleansing and will let you know how it went in the next issue! If you want to reach me while I am gone I will be picking up my e-mail [juliesamms@hotmail.com](mailto:juliesamms@hotmail.com).
- Contributions - I had a little bit of trouble with my P.O. box so if you sent something to me that was returned please send it back, hopefully the problem has been worked out. I hope to see more writing from you out there in the community!
- Money - This is an ugly subject. I wish that the future of this newsletter didn't rest on our

monetary system. But unfortunately, it does. I haven't much of a budget so I don't have much to report but we're still printing! And I have faith that we will be able to continue to do so. Thank you to everyone who has contributed!

- Doula Training - I just spoke with Sharon at Seattle Midwifery School and she is working a Bellingham class into their budget. Nothing is final yet but it is looking as follows... The Community Food Coop is in support of the doula training so it looks like it will take place Nov 30th & Dec 1st and Dec 7th & 8th. These are all-day classes and the full course consists of all four days. I believe tuition will be \$420. This is the DONA (Doulas of North America) approved program designed by Penny Simkin. I will update you as I know more, Let me know if you are interested or want more information.
- Birth Center - Bellingham seems to be missing something in the way of alternative birthing options. Many of my friends who birthed in the hospital did so because they did not feel comfortable birthing in their homes and there was no other option. My vision is to start a non-profit birthing group and open a birthing center - uniting the midwives/doulas/nursing consultants/massage therapists/nutritionists/naturopaths and so on into one wellness center. If you are interested in this please contact me by e-mail [juliesamms@hotmail.com](mailto:juliesamms@hotmail.com) or call me after April 23rd.
- Birth Stories will return to this space next issue! Send them in, mom's and dad's too!

Send me your birth stories! 800 words or less will fill this space. If you are a birth attendant and would like to send other peoples stories please send your name and association with the birthing woman (ie doula, midwife, etc...), parents names should not be included. Send stories to...

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**C/O JULIE SAMMS**  
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**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECK ANY THAT APPLY...**

<input type="checkbox"/> Massage Practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/> Chiropractor	<input type="checkbox"/> Acupuncturist
<input type="checkbox"/> Nurse	<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist	<input type="checkbox"/> Nutritionist
<input type="checkbox"/> Doula	<input type="checkbox"/> Childbirth Educator	<input type="checkbox"/> Mother/Father
<input type="checkbox"/> Midwife	<input type="checkbox"/> Lactation Consultant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____