

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Scope for guideline update

Intrapartum care – water birth

NICE is updating its [guideline on intrapartum care](#) (NG235). This update was initiated by an exceptional surveillance review that identified relevant new evidence on water birth.

The update will be developed using the methods and processes in [developing NICE guidelines: the manual](#).

Who the guideline update covers

The guideline covers women and their babies during labour and birth. It focuses on healthy women who have had a straightforward singleton pregnancy and give birth between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy ('term'). The groups covered by the guideline will remain unchanged. See the [2021 scope for the guideline](#) for further information.

Equality considerations

An [equality and health inequalities impact assessment](#) for this update has been completed, listing the equality issues identified and how they will be addressed in this update.

Settings

All healthcare settings in which NHS maternity care is received or commissioned.

Activities, services or aspects of care covered by the guideline update

We will update the recommendation in NG235 section 1.9 Second stage of labour: water birth by reviewing evidence on water immersion during the second stage of

labour among healthy women with uncomplicated singleton pregnancies giving birth at term and their babies.

We will not review evidence on the effectiveness of labouring in water as pain relief during the first stage of labour, which is covered by recommendations 1.6.10 to 1.6.12 in section 1.6 Pain relief during labour: non-pharmacological pain-relieving strategies.

Draft review question

We have identified the following draft review question that will update the original broader review question from 2007:

- What are the effects and safety of water immersion during the second stage of labour in healthy women with uncomplicated singleton pregnancies at term and their babies?

Economic aspects

We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations.

NICE guidance and quality standards that may be affected by this guideline update

- Intrapartum care quality standard QS105

Further information

NICE guidelines cover health and care in England. Decisions on how they apply in other UK countries are made by ministers in the [Welsh Government](#), [Scottish Government](#) and [Northern Ireland Executive](#).

The guideline update is expected to be published in December 2025.

To follow the progress of the update, see the [guideline in development page](#).

Our website has information about [how NICE guidelines are developed](#).

