

Warm Tub Bath After Spontaneous Rupture of the Membranes

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of pregnant women take a warm bath during labor. Yet few evaluations have addressed benefits claimed and possible risks of this practice. Using retrospective data from a continuing trial at a birth center in Stockholm, we compared 89 women who took a warm bath after spontaneous rupture of the membranes at term with 89 women who had the same interval from spontaneous membrane rupture to delivery and who did not bathe. No statistical difference was observed between the groups with respect to infections, asphyxia or respiratory problems in the newborn infant, or maternal signs of amnionitis. However, a tendency toward more complications was observed in the bathing group. Babies born more than 24 hours after rupture of membranes had significantly lower Apgar scores at 5 minutes in the bathing group than in the control group. As a result of our review of the sparse literature on this practice and the data from this study, we have modified the bathing policy at the birth center from a rather enthusiastic to a more cautious approach. Recommendations about the use of a warm bath in labor will require further investigation, such as randomized trials with large numbers of subjects.

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