Water Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

Midwife, childbirth educator and podcaster Blyss Young joins Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to talk all things water labor and waterbirth. She shares her own path to midwifery and her personal experience laboring in water, then walks through where water birth can happen, the many tub options for home, birth center and hospital, ideal temperature and timing, how monitoring works in the water, and what actually happens in the big moment when a baby is born underwater — plus the gloriously practical details, from lead-free hoses and sub pumps to the humble fishnet.

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Elliott Berlin. And today we're talking about Water Birth. My guest is no stranger to this podcast. You remember her from previous episodes and from our YouTube series, The Real Midwives of Los Angeles. She's a podcaster, childbirth educator, doula placenta encapsulator, midwife and just an incredible human that I love spending time with once in a while when I'm lucky enough to have it. Bliss Young. Welcome to the podcast.

BLYSS YOUNG: Thank you. I'm blushing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You are?

BLYSS YOUNG: You can't see that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, it's kind of a dark studio. It's for me because I'm face blind, I never know who I'm talking to. So let's talk about water stuff. First of all, your progression, just real quickly, you used to be like a plain old business person.

BLYSS YOUNG: I did. Yeah. I've had a few different lives, believe it or not. I worked in catering. I was a waitress.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Catering?

BLYSS YOUNG: I worked in catering.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I was a waiter. Yeah.

BLYSS YOUNG: For a long time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We were samezies.

BLYSS YOUNG: Actually, I did that when I was eight months pregnant with my third. I did not.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That was interesting. Right. Wow. Well, at least you have a place to rest, right?

BLYSS YOUNG: Exactly. Yeah. I've been in corporate world. I've been in retail. So this is where it was always meant to be, but I've had a lot of different lives. It took me a meandering path to get to becoming a midwife.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Cool thing is you're good at whatever you do.

BLYSS YOUNG: Thanks.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And now you're good at being a midwife.

BLYSS YOUNG: I put my whole heart into it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You definitely put your heart into everything you do. I do. So now you're a home birth midwife.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yes.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You deliver babies at home. You help women deliver babies at home. Am I saying that right?

BLYSS YOUNG: Well, I catch babies. You catch babies. The moms deliver the babies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. So they deliver them. You assist. You support. You hold space.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah. I make sure that there's a safety container and witness and maybe even reflect back to her that she really has everything that she needs within herself.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I always learn stuff when I talk to you. That's my favorite part, I think. Let's talk about water birth. We had one. Did you ever have a water birth?

BLYSS YOUNG: No, I didn't. No, I labored in water for two out of the three births. My first labor was incredibly long. I ended up transporting from a birth center and had a forcep delivery in the hospital. So eight years later, I got pregnant and my second baby we thought could take just as long because they say if there's that much space, it could be like the first time, right? Well that baby came in two and a half hours.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh my goodness. Wait, how long was your first? Thirty-six hours. Samesies again.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yes, we're twinsies.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. Our first one was super long. We expected another super long one, it was two hours and change.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yep. And so the midwife did not have time to set up the tub. She came in and they were rushing around to try and get the tub set up and I was like, I have to go to the bathroom. And you know what that means.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I know what that means.

BLYSS YOUNG: She knew what that meant, but I didn't think I know what that meant.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's a different kind of water birth.

BLYSS YOUNG: And she said, let me check you. And she said, you're not going to make it into the tub. It's time to push your baby out. So I delivered in front of the Christmas tree for that one. It was lovely. And then for my third one, I was like, you know what, everybody was so busy rushing around trying to get that tub together. It was so frantic that I was like, let's just not and I'll labor in my own bathtub. And so I did. And then now that I've seen Ricky Lake deliver in her tiny little bathtub, I could have done it. But I thought it was too small. So I got out and delivered in my bedroom.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So interesting. So you had watered labor.

BLYSS YOUNG: I loved the water and labor. Loved, loved, loved it. For that one birth. No, so there's some midwives that will say you shouldn't get in right away and they kind of control that part a little bit more and I do educate my parents that it could slow things down but that's really up to them. Sometimes when you're having a two and a half hour labor you might wanna slow things down. That might feel good to you to kind of slow that down, right? So I always tell people I'm not gonna tell you you can't get in the tub because if someone told me you can't get in the tub I would have been really upset.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, that's true.

BLYSS YOUNG: Especially for urge and instinct is like I really wanna get in there. It made me feel like I didn't even have contractions, literally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Wow.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, my third labor I don't really remember having pain, quote unquote, you know? Like I remember being in labor and there were people around and I definitely had a baby but I don't have a recollection of having it be a painful experience.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm gonna try not to forget food poisoning again because I was very aware of my contractions. Maybe I just need water food poisoning. Doesn't sound as dreamy. Maybe I need to have food poisoning by the Christmas tree. I don't know, maybe I just need to eat better. Maybe, that's it. We did have a home birth, a water birth, one out of four so there's a lot of the shower in the other ones but for the fourth one we did it at home and Alyssa really wanted to get in there but it was moving really fast.

BLYSS YOUNG: The second one?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The fourth one. The fourth one, uh-huh. It was like I think just over 90 minutes start to finish. Wow, yeah that's intense. Our midwife came about halfway through so she was there maybe for 45 minutes and at some point she's like, oh you're doing really nicely. She's like, Elliot if you think you guys really still wanna have the baby in water now's a very good time to start filling that tub and she was in there maybe 15 minutes and the baby came out. Yeah, did she love it? She did love it, it was very cool and it was this like incredible moment that I don't have any faces in my mind. Like I'm face blind so I can't picture them but the one face picture that is kind of etched in I think a different part of my brain

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: is that little guy, our fourth kid, when Alyssa like brought him up to the surface of the water and then I saw his little face come through. That one moment and then he went and took a little breath. That one moment is I can see, not his face now but his face then is like it's the only image of a face that I can recall.

BLYSS YOUNG: That's so beautiful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Incredible moment.

BLYSS YOUNG: That's so beautiful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then I was like past the loofah. Okay. All right, let's talk about water birth. There's a whole bunch of things to talk about. First of all, setting. Where can you have your baby in water? Can you do it in a hospital, at home, in a birthing center, in a U-Haul truck? What's the options?

BLYSS YOUNG: Well I guess you can do a U-Haul truck but that would be very interesting. I'm most familiar with obviously home birth and birth center because I owned a birth center for a certain time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, a cool one. Yeah.

BLYSS YOUNG: Trendy, awesome, I miss that. I miss it sometimes too. I have seen women labor in tubs in the hospital here in LA but I have not heard or experienced anyone delivering here. I think that there's a lot of policies around being able to actually deliver in the water but more comfortability around laboring in the water. And even then but not so many hospitals that have even tubs to labor in. Correct and it's limited too so you may not always be able to. That might not be true across the globe.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I'm just saying here in Los Angeles I know that there's just really one hospital where I see people labor in water but I think they have like eight out of 30 rooms that have a tub and even if you get a room with a tub there's rules about if and when you can get in and out of a tub that are pretty strict. It's not like you said, well I don't think you should get in but if you want to get in, get in there. That reminds me by the way of a birth I was at for a doula so I was her doula back when I was doing the full birth doula situation and I love being a doula for a doula because they know so much and it's really hard to get them out of their head sometimes and I love that challenge of being able to get around.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And so in her case she was kind of like two, three centimeters but she really had the urge to get into the tub and her midwife she's like, you know it's kind of, it could slow things down we're not that progressed yet but you just gotta listen to your instinct and she just jumped in a tub. She's like my instinct says get in the tub. I would say like 30 minutes later she was pushing. Like it just was what her body needed to sink in there, feel totally relaxed and just let go and open up.

BLYSS YOUNG: Beautiful.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So I love that, you know, the way you guys approach it is just really different than in a hospital where there's just all these protocols.

BLYSS YOUNG: Fear.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, they're fear and standardized and like it's not about you, it's about the general. And if you feel, you know it's like almost like school is if you're kind of in that middle zone then it's gonna be potentially very catered to you. But if you're like a very advanced student or kind of a different kind of learner student then it's not gonna be so catered to you.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, absolutely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I sort of feel like hospitals are like that too but I know there's another hospital that. kind of has tubs sometimes with midwives that theoretically they deliver there in tubs, but I don't know personally who's done it.

BLYSS YOUNG: So. Yeah, that's what I'm saying. It's like an urban legend, right? Like, you can, but have you met anybody?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: There's so many policies on it. And then, do you know Dr. Benta Kaiser?

BLYSS YOUNG: No.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. She was on our podcast recently and she's the chief of OB there and she's been advocating hardcore for them to bring in tubs and let them do a water labor and water birth. So, I don't know. I hope there's maybe a trend moving in that direction. So, hospitals, I think in general, there are some hospitals with birthing centers in this country attached to them or part of them where you could have it, but it doesn't seem to be the most popular place to do water birth.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, I think in the 70s, there was a big push for it and there was more happening and then it started to reverse back in the 80s. So, maybe it will go back again, but I always say that the way that there's gonna be change in the mainstream is from the families, from the women really requesting it and saying that this is an important factor in where they choose to deliver, that they have the option to deliver in water if they want.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Like any other business or industry, if the consumer demands it, then eventually the market will respond.

BLYSS YOUNG: Absolutely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So, in a birthing center, like the one that you had, for example, then people come at a certain time to the birthing center.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, when they're in active labor.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: When they're in active labor and then in your case, the tub was built and it was a nice big tub with rose petals in the picture.

BLYSS YOUNG: Not always at the birth, but yes, in the pictures.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, and it was big enough

BLYSS YOUNG: so like you can do stuff in there. Yeah, I mean, I think that's the benefit of having either our birth tubs that we bring to the home or the ones that are in birth centers is that they're designed for that and they're big enough that you can maneuver around and get into good positions and maybe even have someone in the tub with you. Whereas sometimes, like a tub in a home is not necessarily always that big for that. The ones that we bring to the homes that are inflatable are nice because they're soft. So they have a soft bottom. So if you wanted to be on your hands and knees, you have cushion and you'd have to kind of create that same thing in your own tub at home because they're hard.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Great, I wanna get into the nitty gritty because I feel like there's a lot of different birth tub options. At home, like if you go to the hospital, it's usually whatever they have. If you have a birthing center, it's whatever they have. But at home, you do have a lot of options. So let's take a quick break. When we come back, we're gonna talk about all sorts of different labor tubs. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back with Melissa Young. Welcome back to the informed pregnancy podcast we're talking about water birth and water labor tubs at home You have choices, so we have this big tub. That's like built in. It's a jacuzzi tub I don't know who built this house. They thought we'd have lots of parties in water

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I guess it was perfect for us. I'm meant to be yeah But I hear a lot of people say like I want to do water birth But I have this just like standard tub right or a small tub And that's what you said with your mm-hmm second and third I guess you had that small tub, but didn't get in there because you thought I can't have a baby in there Well, I did labor. I just didn't push you got out to it for pushing. Yeah, yeah, but you could really if yeah

BLYSS YOUNG: I'm in general when people are considering tub. Is there a reason why they don't just use that one um The regular tubs that don't have the hard glass around them you know in some apartment buildings There's like the sliding glass doors. Yeah, those are not good because if we needed to get in for an urgent situation It's very difficult to maneuver around them so that really is my only like If it's open it's totally fine The only thing that I would say is that the deeper the water is the more Ability she's gonna have to be able to choose whatever position she wants right and one of those small standard tubs

BLYSS YOUNG: Probably the best position would be on her back just sitting back like you're normally in that right right because if you're on your hands and knees The baby might not be submerged in the water And that's the main concern with water birth is that we don't want the baby

going in and then back out of the water We want the baby to be completely submerged Okay, and also if she's on her hands and knees in that position. She's probably not that much in the water

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I mean just comfort wise it's not warm and all yeah and soft. Yeah, you know it's those

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, so then you could also have the inflatable tubs that you blow up right with like a pump

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, like the one that you would use for a mattress or floatables Yeah, in the pool could be last me can I use one that I blow up like a ball with I'm like no

BLYSS YOUNG: That's gonna take a very long time. I had a dad one time I walked in and he was trying to blow it up with his mouth. Oh, that's the worst hyperventilator We have a tool for that And they have little seats in them that you could sit on some of them Yeah, there's all like the range is incredible the ones that I use they have handles that can help you if you want to Pull on them to have some traction. I saw one with like a cup holder They have a little cup holders, but I always joke with people about it. It like holds a beer beer Yeah, I don't know red wine. I guess it's so tiny Anyways, I don't know if you're gonna be having a beer, but that's about it. Well, it's multipurpose

BLYSS YOUNG: Maybe once you buy it and that's the other thing you could buy it you could rent it also Yes, and the rentable ones they have these ones that can stay heated

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How's that happen it has an internal heater to it?

BLYSS YOUNG: So they're really heavy But that could be an option if someone was kind of concerned about like how's it gonna stay warm and I don't want you To be adding water and bailing water out which sometimes we have to do to keep it warm It's a longer labor. Mm-hmm. So that is usually an option. Is there a temperature that's ideal body temperature Yeah Okay, yeah, like I'm not too cool filling it up you have a little thermometer in there and you just like yeah I mean a lot of people use a thermometer. I'm just a by hand. Yeah, I kind of just know This feels about right for a baby And babies need to be warm when they transition like when we do just do a birth in general You want to make sure that the room is warm?

BLYSS YOUNG: So that's one of the reasons why we want the water to be like body temperature because they're in water

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh for when the baby comes in utero Yeah, and so when they come through it's less of a shock to their system They the transition is very gentle which is one of the benefits I've been to water births where they somebody fills up the tub. Sometimes it's a loving partner Who's trying to do a lot of things at the same time? Yeah, and they go fill the tub and it's just too darn hot especially like in an apartment complex where there's endless water hot water Yeah, and then we've been like post mating bricks of ice Try to cool it off I mean this particular birth I'm thinking about she never got in there because it just never got to a good temperature Yeah, and she was fine. And like I don't even think she realized that's what was going on

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: She just asked once or twice is the tub ready? I'm like no not quite yet

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, we're waiting for post mates to get there. Oh, I had a birth recently and the tub when she touched it She wanted it cool And then when I got it to the temperature that I knew it needed to be she put her toe in she was like That's too hot. She was just overheated, you know, and so she never actually made it in the tub But yeah

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Well, it's nice to have one that where you can set the temperature and try to keep it there The only thing I want to say about while we're talking about different types of birth tubs

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, um, those little kiddie pools are not my favorite So that's another thing people do them because they're like cheap and easy to get a hold of Not your your favorite because of why they're too low They're shallow. So what I was talking about earlier. Oh, from the safety. Yes. Well, and then I have to kind of be a little more controlling over a woman's where she's delivering. Like, no, you need to be in this position, rather than her really being able to follow her own instincts and be able to be wherever she wants. So again, you want it deep. And those tubs, they don't get very deep.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We were at a birth not too long ago where they had a cool tub sunken in.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where you just like walk down and get in that tub. That's a cool tub.

BLYSS YOUNG: The one we were at?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. We were at together. Yes, yes. That was cool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And also good for big doulas to just be able to stick their big, meaty feet in there and not have to reach over. Because a lot of times, I'll come back from a birth where I'm squeezing hips. You must also have it all the time, where you're reaching in to squeeze hips. And then you're getting in whatever position's comfortable for them. But with the higher wall in that tub, you're kind of reaching and squeezing. And so that's great when they're a little built in with a seating area.

BLYSS YOUNG: Or you have to bring your trunks and just hop on in with them. Yeah, just hop on in. And also a jacuzzi. You could do a jacuzzi. You'd have to prepare for that. Like the outdoor jacuzzi? You'd have to take the water out, have it cleaned, have it all of that. But you could do that. So that's the question. What could be in the water?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Just water. Nothing else, no epsom salt, no lavender, no anything?

BLYSS YOUNG: Not for the delivery. And I really try and stay away from essential oils on the body.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: In the water?

BLYSS YOUNG: In general. In birth, because I think it affects the baby's ability to smell what mom smells like.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's so interesting.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, so diffusing. You've never heard of that. Yeah, diffusing in the room I think is great. But.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not on her body?

BLYSS YOUNG: I stay away from it being on her body.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's so interesting. How many times am I gonna say this? How I learn new things every time. Like profound, never thought of these kind of things.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yay.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So nothing in there.

BLYSS YOUNG: So then, because I also.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Crystals, I had someone pull their crystals in.

BLYSS YOUNG: That's fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Ooh, crystals in the water.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, you could put crystals in the water. But anything else. And some people like to filter the water, which is totally fine if that feels important to you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No fuzzy ball, like the fizz ball. No fizz balls. But I've had people who labor also in their in-ground hot tub outside by the pool.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: For labor.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah. But not delivering. As long as she's intact, so her bag is intact, she's not ruptured, that would be fine.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

BLYSS YOUNG: And sometimes in the pool itself.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah.

BLYSS YOUNG: Swimming around. Warm, totally. And some women like to be cool. One more thing about.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I like to be cool. During labor?

BLYSS YOUNG: No, just in life. Totally.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I try.

BLYSS YOUNG: We use lead-free hoses. Because when they get hot, they can leach chemicals from the hose. So that's an important aspect as well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So here's a very practical question. How you get the water in and out of a tub. People always ask this.

BLYSS YOUNG: It's great. I love looking at the dad's face. He's like, so.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You take a cup. How do you get the water out? And where does it go?

BLYSS YOUNG: Exactly. It's a lot of water. Yeah. In our case, you order a birth kit. And a hose comes in with an adapter that can either go to a faucet or to a shower head. And usually the shower head is the best option because the pressure is better. I've even had people hook it up to their washer and dryer. So it just depends on your configuration.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, that's interesting. Yeah. Fire hydrant?

BLYSS YOUNG: No. Not that one yet. Although I did have a dad do it from the outside, which was hilarious. He was trying to go in the window from the outside. And I was like, no, it has to be warm.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, it's too cold.

BLYSS YOUNG: He didn't think about it. It was great. And then when we're done, you pump the water out with a sub pump. Same hose, you take it off and put it on there. And then you pump it out.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you bring a pump with you.

BLYSS YOUNG: I bring a sub pump.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So if somebody at their home is doing a home birth.

BLYSS YOUNG: They would need a sub pump.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: They have to rent it, buy it?

BLYSS YOUNG: If they're just on their own, if they don't have. Yeah, they'd have to buy it.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I think that was about $100 from Home Depot. A sub pump.

BLYSS YOUNG: Sub pump. And that's basically like if something flooded, yeah, you would be able to pump water out. And it can go in the toilet, usually. That's the most often. But if you're on the first floor and they have a garden, it's great for plants.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, nice. So just pump it out. Well, that reproductive juju.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah. And we're recycling water, right? That's a good thing. Absolutely.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Because you kind of have to keep an eye on it, though. Because I've seen more than once where on the filling or unfilling, and something comes loose or comes off, and then the neighbors downstairs are knocking on the door, like, what's going on?

BLYSS YOUNG: Really?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, I've never had one go about like that. Twice. One was a filling. And it just wasn't a good connection and just leaked all over and flooded their bathrooms. The same one that actually she never got into because it was too hot. There was something going on there.

BLYSS YOUNG: It was not meant to be.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not meant to be. And another one where they put it into kind of like a shower, and it was a little shallow. And it just overflowed the shower and just started to drip downstairs. Just a word of caution. If you're on the second floor.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, any floor that's not the best.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Or even just for your own bathroom and house. Right. Also, when we talk about rentable tubs, people kind of get grossed out about how many people have been in there before. But you get a liner.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, it's a disposable liner. Look. I've been around for so long, it was before they had liners and every single birth we had to clean and sterilize that tub and they have lots of nooks and crannies. So when they got the liners it was a very happy day and it's for you only and then it gets tossed out after your delivery. It conforms to the tub so you just don't even really know it's there.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I recently saw someone bring one of those to the hospital. Which one?

BLYSS YOUNG: An inflatable tub? Or a liner?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, a liner.

BLYSS YOUNG: For what? Because it's a hospital tub that's kind of, who knows, I mean it's just a little grotty.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Actually, not such a bad idea. So yes, she said that she found that they make them for traveling, it's like when

BLYSS YOUNG: you go to hotels and things like that, it's this liner with a little drain opening. That's interesting. Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Now see, I learned something new.

BLYSS YOUNG: Whoa!

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Twinsies! Again. Gosh, I have some more questions about birth. Before I take one more break, I do want to ask you one question, which is this. People sometimes, they're going to have a hospital birth, they're going to go to the hospital, but they want to labor in water. But when you guys are around, in the next segment we're going to talk about some of the risks and benefits and some of the things that you do while you're in water. They're monitored kind of by you or a midwife assistant at home. Are there any things to consider in terms of safety, like when to get in or when to get out? People who shouldn't go into water and labor at home?

BLYSS YOUNG: I think really it's about following your instincts in labor, for sure. There's very little that could go wrong in terms of submerging yourself in water. But if your bag is ruptured, you don't want to be in the water for an extended period of time. It doesn't mean that you can't have a delivery in water, but you don't want to be sitting in water for a long period of time. So that would be the biggest thing that I would say.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You midwives and the instincts. I love it. All right. Don't go anywhere. We're coming right back with some nitty-gritty details about water birth with Midwife Bliss Young. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We're talking water birth with Midwife Bliss Young. Okay. Why would someone want to get into water? Just in terms of laboring, you're not talking about delivery necessarily.

BLYSS YOUNG: Either or, yeah. Yeah. So we've been talking a lot about water birth, but water in general is definitely helps relax the system, relax the muscles, and can take away a lot. Take away. I shouldn't say take away, but relieve a lot of the discomfort from labor. They call it the aquadural.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, they do. It kind of looks like that. For people, I think especially who like a warm, comfortable bath and are used to a condition to it, almost Pavlovian, they get in there and all of a sudden it's like, yeah, exactly. Yeah. It's great. I see people sometimes just really get out of their mind, like they're thinking, thinking about everything. How intense is this? How much longer is it going to be? How long was it? When I get in that bath and like within a little bit of time, I just fall into just like the body still doing its thing, but the mind kind of goes quiet.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yes. It's beautiful. And one of my favorites is if the couple is into it, having them in the water together, you know, because it just lends itself to a lot of touching and being close. And we know in birth that leads to more oxytocin flowing, which helps the birth proceed. Ah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: The good hormone. Yeah. Can water do something similar? Do you take in the shower without being submerged? Oh, yes. I had a water birth in the shower last year. Oh, you did? You gave birth in the shower?

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah. She had been laboring in the tub for a long, long time and she's like, something's not right. Cause she had had her, it was her fourth baby. Oh. So I trusted her and I was like, do you want to get out? And she's like, yes. You know, we pushed on the stool for a little bit because I don't normally check mole tips. People have already had baby. You don't check their cervix. You just. No. If they're feeling pushy, right? Yeah. I did check and she was like seven and I was like, babe, you still have some cervix. Why don't you guys go get in the shower? And so she was like, okay. And they went in the shower and literally five minutes later, he's yelling for me and I go in and he caught his baby. Wow. In the shower. That's so cool.

BLYSS YOUNG: So I think for her too, like she thought maybe she'd want to be around all of her kids and in the middle of everything, but that also just being in a closed area where it was just private. I send couples into the shower all the time in the hospital because they can get some privacy. Yeah. The monitors, you know, so it's a really great way for people to progress, I feel.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: We just even had a birth center birth and there was a lot of support people that she loved. She was eating a lot. Everybody there had a role and everybody served the

role. She knew exactly how to have around her in the moment what she needed around her. But at some point she just was like, I'm getting in that shower now. She got in there sat in the ball. He got in there with her and everybody realized in that moment, this is them time. People just left. They were like next door and they stayed in there for like an hour, just, you know. It's great. You hear that little ah in the background, you know. Yeah, when you hear the noises getting louder, you're like, yes, it's working. Having its desired effect.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then they have that wand in the shower sometimes where you can kind of point the water where she wants it and where she needs it. So that's a pretty cool option too. I would say this though, when you have a tub that you're gonna set up and some of them are snapped together, some of them are inflated like we talked about earlier, you said in your second birth, you didn't make it in time because it was quick. And then the third one, there was like commotion about setting it up, but could it be preset up?

BLYSS YOUNG: Totally. We did that recently thinking that that would help and she still never got in the tub, unfortunately, but it could. Timing wise, you mean? Yeah, she just didn't wanna move from where she was and so she never got in the tub. Which happens sometimes. We have the tub available for people. Sometimes people get in and they realize they don't wanna be in, either they're too hot or some smaller women sometimes don't feel like they can ground enough. They're floating around in the water a little bit too much. What do they call those? The pool noodles sometimes can help. Oh yeah, that's cool.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: For women who are like five feet and under, you know, like little petite women.

BLYSS YOUNG: That's interesting, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So.

BLYSS YOUNG: Sometimes their skin just is angry after a while.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah. It's like pruney and just not.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, they just feel like it's just not working for them. And so helping them understand the flexibility of like, even though you envisioned a water birth and you thought that that's where you were gonna be, let's try something else because maybe it'll progress and maybe you'll feel better about being on land, as they say, a land birth.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Land baby. Yeah. That's interesting about the pool noodle and just the other things that you consider of different people of different size and shape and how to get them comfortable in there. But it just sounded like for your third baby it would have been like if it was all pre-set up, then maybe it could have hopped in there.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, totally. I've had women talk about that, that thought they were gonna go fast. And the only downside to that I would say is you know how sometimes when you're towards the end of pregnancy and you're having all these stop starts and you think you're going to labor or you're wishing that you were in labor and there's that tub sitting in the corner of your bedroom staring at you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, just reminding you that you're not in labor yet.

BLYSS YOUNG: Right, that's the only thing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So it's, you know, it's always a timing issue. I thought that's what mother-in-law's job was.

BLYSS YOUNG: Which part?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Staring at them.

BLYSS YOUNG: Staring at you and telling you you're not in labor yet.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, yeah. Very true. Now, are you gonna be in labor now? Now? Is it happening now? I haven't heard from you in two hours. Are you okay? Did you have the baby?

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, off the mother-in-law. So. So. Also, sometimes it seems like the baby overheats a little bit. Maybe the core temperature gets hot and the heart rate changes.

BLYSS YOUNG: So when a mom does get into the tub, one of the things that midwives will normally do is check and see what's happening with baby. Because some babies can respond in a way where their heart rate is tachycardic, which is fast. And so we would ask the mom to get out at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How do you monitor them while they're in water?

BLYSS YOUNG: The babies?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Both, mother and baby.

BLYSS YOUNG: Well, mom in general, we're just kind of listening to what she's reporting and talking to her about how she's feeling. With baby, we use a handheld Doppler.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's waterproof?

BLYSS YOUNG: It is waterproof. The wand part that we put on the mom that we're listening to, it's waterproof.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Not the speaker? The speaker part, if you drop it in the water, it's gonna be a really bad day.

BLYSS YOUNG: It's probably not good for anybody, yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Really bad day.

BLYSS YOUNG: But in the hospital, now they have, you might know what they're called. Oh, I forgot the name of it. The little Bluetooth situation. And it's water resistant. And it just has a sticker. So that's great, because they can get in the shower. I don't know about submerging. I've never seen that. It says water resistant, and they let them do the shower. But I've seen people wear it in the tub.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, you have?

BLYSS YOUNG: And go under. They're not supposed to, but I've seen it happen, and it still works. It seems to still work, so I'll just stop. So that's the difference between the comfort of intermittent monitoring, which is what we do at home, versus continuous monitoring, which is usually what they're doing in the hospital.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you listen with the Doppler, you can hear the heart rate.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And you just listen periodically, make sure everything's happy as a clam.

BLYSS YOUNG: Exactly.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Whereas sometimes in the hospital, they like to constantly hear the heart rate.

BLYSS YOUNG: Yeah, and there's been a lot of studies that have been revealed that have shown that that's not necessarily giving better outcomes, but actually leading to more cesareans.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: More intervention, because every time you see a little variation, you jump on it.

BLYSS YOUNG: Right, exactly. And then, so for mother, you're just listening and talking and touching. Yeah, sometimes we might take her temperature, if we feel like that might be a concern. But usually, yeah, just kind of being close to her and monitoring how she's feeling when she's in the water.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: What happens when goop gets in the water? Birth is goopy. There's all sorts of goop.

BLYSS YOUNG: Do you mean poop? Is that a nice way of saying poop?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No, poop is some of the goop, but there's all sorts of goop. There's amniotic fluid, there's like little bits of tissue that come out. Well, think about it. The baby...

BLYSS YOUNG: The pee in there. Right, the baby's drinking its own urine, and urine is sterile. The mom's urine is sterile, so there's nothing wrong with that. What about dad's urine? Okay, next topic. Dad's urine is sterile, too. Actually, I've never thought about dad peeing in the tub. I'm sure it happens, it's gotta happen. Have love, you'll just be in the tub. Ah, that's funny. But you know, birth is not sterile, first of all. Like it doesn't have to be a sterile process. Especially if you've ever watched an animal give birth. Right, exactly. And actually, the point that I wanted to make about one of the benefits of home birth is that water birth at home is that it contains some of that mess, right? Because people ask all the time like,

BLYSS YOUNG: isn't birth messy? And I'm like, hey, it's not gonna be like Dexter. We know how to control it a little bit. But if they are in the tub, it's pretty self-contained and then it gets pumped out, right? Just saying Dexter was really good at cleaning up after himself. Yeah, I never watched the

show.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh, so you don't even know the reference.

BLYSS YOUNG: You've seen the before he cleans up after himself. Okay. But in terms of poop, which a lot of moms do kind of feel concerned about, both on land and in the water. We use a little fishnet and we scoop it out really quick before anybody even is paying attention and it's gotten in and out of the water. So is there never a point, what if she throws up in there, like that's also? If she throws up, it's probably time to get out. Time to get out? Yeah, and if she has diarrhea, probably time to get out. So there are times.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Sorry listeners, this is a little odd.

BLYSS YOUNG: Hey listen, you're listening to a pregnancy podcast.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: That's right. You're probably driving right now and like, nah, grabbing the wheel extra hard. We're working out. We'll try and say something really pretty soon. At the very end, we'll save something. Yeah, so, and then when she gets out, sometimes there's enough time to sub pump all that stuff out of there. Sure.

BLYSS YOUNG: We could do that. And then change the liner and start all over again.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yeah, we probably could do that. Like your first birth probably. You could have done that. Yeah. Twice. Twice, right exactly. Or more. All right, let's talk about the big moment. Baby comes out in water. This is the pretty part. Yeah, see we promised the pretty part. First of all, just the mechanics. I think it's very hard for people to understand if you put your baby submerged in water, bad things are gonna happen to them. So why doesn't that happen at birth?

BLYSS YOUNG: Because babies are breathing amniotic fluid. That's what they're doing in utero is they're in water and the water is going through their system. So it's a very gentle transition for them to come in through water. And they're not actually taking that first breath until they hit the oxygen. So that's why the most important safety thing is that the baby doesn't go in and out of the water.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Right, so once the lungs inflate and they start breathing, then you can't put them back underwater. Exactly. Or they'll have the same problem that we have if we're stuck underwater. Exactly, yeah. So that's why all those things you talked about, a shallow tub or not great, or those tubs where you can't get in there and help out if you need to. How long could you, would you keep them underneath before you bring them up to the surface?

BLYSS YOUNG: That's the question that most midwives kind of diverge on. A midwife that taught me was like, what's the point? Like why do you need to keep a baby underwater?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Pictures.

BLYSS YOUNG: Sometimes you do get beautiful pictures of the baby's eyes wide open. Especially with the GoPro underwater. Oh, so amazing. But I don't know that I have a particular time. Again, for me it would be instinct. I think not feeling nervous and not rushing that process is definitely okay to just kind of have it be gentle. You can even take a moment to look at the baby and kind of sense

what's happening. I was just listening to another podcast on the way over here actually, and she was talking about the transition of a baby. And what she said was, we want everybody in the room to be breathing, right? Because if you're holding your breath, because you're nervous, the baby's gonna sense that too. So I think that trusting the process

BLYSS YOUNG: that this is a gentle transition from in utero to out of utero, and the baby is actually coming into the world for the first time. So if everybody could just kind of slow down and take a deep breath, that's gonna be a beautiful experience for everyone.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You do so many births. Sometimes when you do something for a long time you get burned out, but if people at home could see the glow on you right now as you're talking about birth, you just have such like your happy place.

BLYSS YOUNG: I love water birth too. And the other thing about water birth is that I tell parents, it's harder for me to be right up in there in the water, right? Unless I'm in the tub, which I'm usually not. So I love when mom and dad are the first hands to touch the baby. And guiding them through that process of encouraging them and showing them that that's what they need. All they need is each other during this moment. That's not the difficult part of labor is the catching part.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: No. It's fun. It's fun. It's really sweet. Like I don't ever remember seeing the first breath on a land birth personally. I'm not necessarily in that vantage point anyway, but at water birth I've seen it a few times and the most, like I said, the most prominent memory, the only face I have saved in my entire brain is my fourth baby, that little guy coming out taking his first breath as he came. He wasn't in the water very long, I would say maybe five seconds, 10 seconds, but then when she brought him to the surface and then he came through, it's just like, maybe I need to see everybody's face in water. I don't know. Maybe that'll help. Last question. for me and then any thoughts from you are on land you have all these

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: different options on how you deliver position wise on all four squatting one side the other side standing up on you're hanging from the ceiling what about in water are there still options I mean pretty much you could do all of

BLYSS YOUNG: those same yeah yeah you could have something hanging from the ceiling and still use that while your bottom is submerged in the water definitely hands and knees and reclining on your back what maybe with your partner behind you or in front of you it's very common side lying do you get a little flashlight in there to see what's going on sometimes you know for me I really do a lot of touch so rather than like actually entering the vagina I just kind of put my hand on the outside and I can feel the bulge I can feel when the head is starting to get closer so that I can guide her in terms of slowing the process down for keeping her tissues intact that would be the only reason I would really like again so midwiffic it's just I see the

BLYSS YOUNG: Instagram hashtag feel the bulge it's gonna be a viral campaign but one thing when you talk about lights at one birth I had a photographer she was a photographer who was delivering and she had a friend come and photograph her birth and they got these little lights that submerged into the water they could change colors if you wanted them to you yeah but they made for such beautiful photographs because it was illuminated from the bottom that's an also a good tip yeah I've

seen people now and put those twinkly lights like the Christmas lights in between the water oh and the

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: liner is a liner is clear makes me a little uncomfortable but I saw what you were talking about too they were filming for a documentary and they had the water lights in there and it was a really cool beautiful effect yeah cool I will say this just one tip I've learned a lot from you as again as always unfortunately we're towards the end of our episode one of my favorites I really love talking to you so much and I always learn from you and this is a topic that I feel many questions about and don't know as much nearly about it as you do so I'm grateful for you to come in and share one tip I could share that nobody told us before our home birth yeah and water birth was that after all was said and done and my wife got up

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: to step out of the tub with her baby with our baby I suppose we had nothing on the floor there really she just stepped out onto it and then you know walk through the bathroom to the bed and just lay down on the bed for a bit I spent about an hour at a run to CBS real quick and get some hydrogen peroxide I spent an hour cleaning gooey red stuff off the grout so there was no plastic it was no plastic there's no tempo it's just our tub built into the house so I know like when you set up the tub you always that stuff around it but in our case and nobody really thought about like maybe take up old towel that nobody cares about and just have it over there could

BLYSS YOUNG: have been a nice totally what we normally do when mom gets out is we put a chucks in between her legs mm-hmm so it doesn't all yeah so it contains the bleeding yeah we had nothing like that yeah sorry no it's okay I never thought I would be the toothbrush hydrogen peroxide blood out of the grout kind of guy but hydrogen peroxide is a great tip for getting out blood though it's amazing our grout is cleaner than it was so there's a benefit any final thought um you know I think that having the option to be able to be in water can make a real difference in a woman who's wanting to have a unmedicated natural delivery so when selecting a provider or a location I would look for some place where that is an

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: option for you good call yeah you need to know that towards the beginning yeah if you know sometimes we don't think about the end at the beginning so when you're looking at where you want to give birth with whom you want to give birth and what facility you're gonna give birth and even labor yeah these are some things to think about because for people who it works well for being in water it works really well yeah yeah I agree yeah where can we find you online you can find me on social media at birthing bliss midwifery and it's BLYSS it is thank you BLYSS and then birthingbliss.com is my website beautiful thank you again for joining me thank you for having me at home thanks for listening to our podcast and thanks for sharing us

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