

## **Prevention of Legionnaire's Disease in Water birth**

### **Introduction:**

There have been recent cases presented in the media of Legionnaire's infection in newborns that have been associated with water birth.

Legionnaire's disease is caused by the L. pneumophila bacillus which exists where water collects and can become airborne. Sources include puddles, stagnant pools, lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. In hospitals, where the majority of infections and outbreaks occur, the bacillus can exist in the plumbing and air conditioning. In the cases of community acquired Legionnaire's the bacillus can come from sources such as whirlpool bathtubs, hot tubs and public spas; plumbing systems in homes, air conditioning systems, humidifiers that generate a mist, fountains and water features (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/legionella-eng.php>).

### **Preventing Infection:**

The risk of Legionella infection cannot be eliminated completely, however it can be reduced by cleaning and disinfecting bathtubs and birthing pools intended for use for the labour and birth of your baby.

- 1) Confirm the quality of water it not potable municipal water (e.g., recent testing of well water).
- 2) Remove bath mats, toys, and other items.
- 3) Clean your bathtub by using a cleaning solution to remove all visible dirt, stains, and oils.
- 4) Disinfect the tub using bleach.
  - a. Mix. Pour ½ cup of Bleach into 1 gallon of water.
  - b. Wipe. Wipe the tub with bleach solution.
  - c. Wait. Wait 5 minutes for disinfecting.
- 5) Rinse your tub well with hot water, using a clean hose (not a garden hose).
- 6) Before filling the tub or birthing pool for labour run the hot tap water through the hose or tap for 3 minutes to clear the hose and pipes of stagnant water and sediment.

There are increased risks of infection when there are jets, bubbles, heating systems. If your tub has a heating or recirculating system please consider using a disposable liner in your bathtub.

If you are renting a tub please ensure you have read the guidelines on how to prepare the tub for birth. Please ensure you are renting or buying from a supplier that is intending the product to be used for labour and birth. Water should be fresh and the tub filled only when active labour is established.