

Why Do Our Permanent Pools Have A Single-Use Plug?

We are often asked by our customers about our single-use plug & chain for the FP3 Labour & Birth Pool and how and why we came to the decision to choose this option over others for plugging the drain. Two of the long term trends driving birth pool design in the UK and USA markets are:

- Rising awareness of the need to prevent of cross-infection
- Increased awareness of the negative impact on both the birth outcomes and the mothers' satisfaction when their choice of water for labour pain relief is not available

There was a time when most pools in the UK market had a large ball valve inside a near-horizontal drain pipe. This approach proved both difficult to decontaminate and a trap for items such as; thermometers that entered the pipe unseen and caused a blockage. The permanent birthing pools on the market today use one of two designs:

- Cable-driven plug with a control on the rim or side of the pool
- Plug and chain, either single-use or not

We have consulted with hospitals and birth centers on their experience with cable-driven plugs and discovered that this option was not as highly rated as may have been initially expected. Some had broken mechanisms: either not being able to lift the plug, or the plug falling closed after the release of the control device. Given that water depth in waterbirth tubs is usually greater than for the bathtubs that these devices are designed for, it is perhaps unsurprising that their reliability is less than 100%. No midwife or nurse wants to be or should be fighting with a plug in 20+ inches of used water after the birth of a baby, even when gauntlets are on hand.



Cable-

driven plugs require more structure inside the drain and are therefore also more prone to blockage. We realised that a simple plug design was worth exploring. The issue with re-using a plug and chain is that the chain is exceedingly difficult to decontaminate. We could overcome both the infection prevention and reliability issues, provided it was single use and the chain was long enough to be hooked up outside the pool. The plug is simply pulled out with the chain and disposed of. The drain has a recessed grate to catch any larger items not sieved out of the grey water, but there are no cables or other obstacles. Flushing fresh water down the drain and then a chlorine solution will decontaminate it. In the video below, you can see the plug being used.

[embed]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq0wjizY-2w&t=1s>/embed]

So far we have not received one report of problems with drains and plugs. This may not be the last word on plugs and drains for birthing pools, but it appears to be the best solution available today. Our Single-Use Plug with chain is available for just £2 (US\$3) each in boxes of 100.