

Having your baby at home



Information for patients Maternity Services



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Giving birth at home can be a very fulfilling experience for you and your family. This information leaflet is designed to answer some of the questions you may have around homebirth.

Why homebirth?

For healthy women with a straightforward pregnancy it is safe to give birth the Birthplace Study (NPEU 2012) shows that women who plan to give birth at home are more likely to achieve a normal birth and will experience less intervention. We also know that maternal satisfaction tends to be higher. The Royal College of Obstetricians and the Royal College of Midwives jointly support homebirth for women having a straightforward pregnancy:

'There is no reason why homebirth should not be offered to women at low-risk of complications and it may confer considerable benefits for them and their families.'

Joint Statement on homebirth RCOG & RCM 2013

Additional benefits of a planned homebirth

- Women cope better with labour when they are in familiar surroundings.
- Women at home require less pain relieving drugs.
- Women at home have less medical intervention.
- Women who have had a homebirth describe feeling in control and a sense of empowerment.

What do you mean by 'low-risk of complications'?

This means that you will be between 37 and 42 weeks' pregnant after an pregnancy, with a baby in a head down position and in spontaneous labour.

What can I expect if I choose homebirth?

Your midwife will visit you at home during the antenatal period to discuss your planned home birth in more detail.

When your labour starts please telephone triage on:

- **0114 226 8091**

A midwife will come to your home and assess how your labour is progressing. Once you are in established labour you will have a midwife with you throughout labour until your baby is born. At the time of birth there will be two midwives with you.

The midwives will stay with you until they are sure that both you and your baby are well. Ideally by this time your baby will have fed and you will have passed urine. It is preferable to have another adult with you during the first 24 hours or so after birth for some additional help and support.

An appointment for your baby's newborn examination within 72 hours of birth. We will also arrange the newborn hearing screening appointment at the hospital. The midwife will advise you if any other appointments are needed.

Can I have a home waterbirth?

Using water is an excellent way to cope with labour. If you think you may like to use water for labour and birth you will need a birthing pool as domestic baths are not deep enough to safely deliver your baby. We have 22 pools which are available to women in Sheffield. There is a £30 charge for the pool liner; please ask your midwife for more information. Alternatively you may choose to hire or buy your own pool.

What else can I do to help myself during labour?

- Warm bath, hot water bottle (do not place on abdomen) or wheat bag to ease back pain and help you to relax.
- Back and shoulder massage - get your partner to practise during pregnancy.
- Moving around and changing position frequently.
- Concentrating on an object or repeating certain words during a contraction.
- Complementary therapy

Pain Relief available at home:

- TENS machine for early labour (TENS machines are available for hire from a variety of companies).
- Entonox also called 'gas and air' (available at all home births).
- If you would like to have opiate analgesia (diamorphine, morphine or pethidine) available this can also be arranged, speak to your midwife. Many women request to have opiates available but few women seem to actually use them at home.

For more information ask your midwife for the 'Pain-relief in labour' leaflet or visit one of the websites listed at the back of this leaflet.

Do I need lots of equipment?

All the equipment needed is carried by the midwife attending your home when you go into labour. When your labour starts we will also arrange for entonox (gas and air) to be delivered to your home by our contracted couriers.

We do however ask that you supply the following:

- Clean plastic sheeting to cover the area where your baby will be born (decorating sheets, bin liners, shower curtain).

- Sheets and towels. These provide further protection for your home but will also be used for drying and wrapping baby.
- It helps having everything you and your baby will need all in one place. So please pack a bag the same as if you were planning hospital birth.

Childcare

If this is not your first baby/child you may be planning for your other children to be present at the birth. If you are planning for the children to be in the house we would recommend that you have another adult available to take care of their needs.

That all sounds great, but what if things don't go to plan?

The results from the UK Birth Place study (2012) show that if you have already had one or more straightforward vaginal births then being at home does not pose any additional risk to the baby when compared to labouring in the hospital. It also has advantages to the mother with less intervention, including assisted birth and caesarean section.

If this is your first baby then the study did show a slight increase in risk of an adverse or serious outcome to the baby of 9.3 per 1000 births compared to 5.3 per 1000 hospital births.

It is also important to understand that some women planning a homebirth will be transferred to hospital during labour. This is more common with your first baby, with 45% transferring to hospital, than second or subsequent births which is 12%.

Why would I be transferred to hospital?

- Labour is slow to progress.
- We have concerns about you or your baby during labour.
- Your baby passes meconium (opens his/her bowels) during labour.
- You change your mind about wanting to be at home.
- We have concerns about you or your baby after birth.

If an unexpected emergency occurs which requires prompt care only available in a hospital, you will be transferred with the midwife to the hospital by a 999 ambulance.

Useful websites

- www.sth.nhs.uk/our-hospitals/jessop-wing

Choosing where to have your baby:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/where-can-i-give-birth/>
- <https://www.aims.org.uk/>



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