

Home birth

This leaflet discusses the suitability of a home birth for you and the practical arrangements for the birth at home.

Why home birth?

Giving birth at home can be a wonderful experience for you and your family, giving many benefits:

- You don't have to travel in labour
- You will be in a familiar, relaxing and private environment
- You may feel more in control at home
- You'll receive one to one care at home
- If you have other children, there will be no need to leave them
- Your partner may feel more relaxed; there's no need to worry when to go into hospital and you won't be separated from your family after the birth
- After your baby is born you can use your own bath/shower and sleep in your own bed

Can I have a home birth?

You are suitable for a homebirth if:

- You have no current medical issues that affect safety during birth
- You have not had any major problems in previous births
- You are experiencing a straightforward pregnancy
- No major complications are anticipated during the birth

Please see our leaflet, '[Your risks in pregnancy: deciding the right place for you to give birth](#)'. Available from the [SaTH Internet site](#)

If you've been advised to have Consultant-led care in hospital, but wish to have a home birth you will need to discuss this with your midwife and Consultant. They will discuss an individual plan of care with you.

Important information

We are committed to facilitating your birth choices, but our priority has to be to provide a safe maternity service for all women and babies.

We operate a 'midwife on call' system which is coordinated by Wrekin MLU and RSH MLU. Please contact the relevant maternity unit as early as possible if you think labour has started (phone numbers on p. 3).

Home births, along with all other services, are managed in line with our 'Escalation Policy'. At times when our service is very busy or we have unexpected staffing problems, we may not be able to facilitate your home birth and you may be asked to attend the nearest Midwife Led Unit or the Consultant Unit at PRH. This is so that that we can maintain a safe service for all women and babies in our care.

The 'Birthplace in England' Study (<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace>) found that women having second or subsequent babies did not have any increase in poor outcomes for the baby compared to having their baby in a Midwife Led Unit or a Consultant Led Unit. For women having their first babies, however, an increased risk to the baby was found (9.3 per thousand births compared to 5.3 per thousand), which means that 99.07% of first babies born at home have a normal outcome compared to 99.47% in hospital.

The Birth Place Decisions leaflet is available from [NHS Choices](#) and the SaTH Internet site or ask your midwife for a copy.

Information about Group B Streptococcus (GBS)

GBS is a common bacterium (bug) which is carried in the vagina and rectum of 2–4 in 10 women (20–40%) in the UK. GBS is not a sexually transmitted disease and most women carrying GBS will have no symptoms. Carrying GBS is not harmful to you but it can affect your baby around the time of birth. GBS can occasionally cause serious infection in newborn babies, and, very rarely, during pregnancy and before labour.

GBS is sometimes found during pregnancy when you have vaginal or rectal swabs or a urine test. In the UK, the NHS does not routinely offer all pregnant women screening for GBS. For more information about available tests, visit the Group B Strep Support (GBSS) website: www.gbss.org.uk/TestingforGBS.

Practical arrangements

Your midwife will bring all the equipment she needs. Midwives have basic equipment to monitor you and your baby's wellbeing during labour. They also have equipment to deal with problems that may occur unexpectedly at the birth e.g. heavy bleeding or a baby that is slow to breathe. You need to make sure that the room you want to give birth in:

- is warm and comfortable;
- has sufficient space for you to move around in labour;
- has enough space for the midwife to safely oversee the birth;
- has an area for equipment, including a firm surface in case your baby requires oxygen;
- has good lighting (a bright lamp would be fine);
- has easy access to a working landline phone or signal for mobiles (in case of an emergency).

Many women also like the idea of having a pool for use at home. Please discuss this with your community midwife as she will be able to advise you on the suitability of pools. For water births, please refer to a separate leaflet, available from your midwife.

What about the mess?

There is usually very little mess and midwives will bring some disposable pads/small sheets to protect the area where you give birth. Plastic sheeting, old sheets or towels will do the rest. Make sure you have a good supply of maternity pads.

Will I need any special equipment?

- Plastic sheets to protect your bed, furniture and carpet
- Bright torch and spare batteries
- Warm towels and clothes for your baby
- An overnight bag including clothes for you and your baby in case you need to be transferred
- Please have a car seat ready for the baby in case you need to go to hospital after the birth

Music, cushions, and face cloths can all be helpful during labour to make you feel relaxed and as comfortable as possible. Make sure you have painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen available for after the birth.

Health and safety issues

Please ensure that the midwife can work in an uncluttered environment in order to maintain health and safety requirements.

Due to the presence of flammable gases (oxygen and entonox), please avoid using any naked flame, which includes, open fires, candles, gas heaters and cigarettes.

What can my birth partner do?

It is important that you involve your partner in making the decision to have a home birth. Their help and support will be needed. Their main role will be to support you; physically such as rubbing your back, and emotionally. They can be helpful in other ways, for example:

- Organising care for other children. If your children are staying at home talk to them about what to expect.
- Providing refreshments for you and your midwives (you will need to have plenty of fluids)
- Knowing where everything is!

How does the home birth service work?

Once you have decided to have a home birth, your community midwife will liaise with other members of the team, and make arrangements for the birth. Your antenatal care with your midwife and/or GP will continue as normal. Your midwife will visit you at home at 36 – 37 weeks and will bring some of the equipment needed for the birth. You will need to keep this safe until required. There will also be an opportunity to discuss your birth plans at this appointment.

How to contact your midwife when labour begins

From 37 weeks of pregnancy, your team of midwives will provide midwifery cover via an on-call rota. However, it is not always possible to guarantee that you will know the midwife who will be caring for you as other midwives from your local Midwife Led Unit may be on call.

If you think you are in labour, please call either **Wrekin MLU (01952 565706 for Telford, Bridgnorth and Market Drayton areas)** or **RSH MLU (01743 261216 for Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Oswestry or Whitchurch areas)**. The first on call midwife will then come out to you. If the midwife is coming out to you at night please put your house lights on so that she can easily identify your house. The midwife will assess

how your labour is progressing and once you are in established labour, a midwife will stay with you and a second midwife will also attend shortly before the birth.

The midwife caring for you will bring additional equipment to your home. This includes:

- Her community bags, which will include a hand held Doppler (sonic aid or baby heart monitor) and additional equipment bag.
- Entonox and oxygen
- Resuscitation and transfer equipment
- Baby weighing scales

Depending on the length of your labour, your midwife may need to hand over care to a colleague.

Please note that it is illegal for any person to deliver a baby other than a registered midwife or medical practitioner, or student midwife or medical student who is being supervised by a midwife or doctor, unless in an emergency.

What pain relief can I have at home?

You can use different methods of pain relief at home such as massage, relaxation and controlling your breathing. Your position can also make a difference; upright positions such as kneeling, sitting, squatting, walking around and using a birthing ball can all help.

For more information, please read the 'Pain relief' section in your Pregnancy Information Booklet. You can buy or hire a TENS machine from a number of companies and the midwife will bring Entonox (gas and air) with her. Midwives do not carry pethidine for home births. **If you think you might want to use pethidine in labour then you would have to go to a midwife led unit.**

What happens if I need to transfer to hospital?

It sometimes becomes necessary to transfer care to the hospital. This can be for a number of reasons:

- You may change your mind during labour and feel that you want to be in hospital or you may wish to have an epidural
- There may be health concerns about you or your baby, for example, labour is taking longer than expected, your baby may pass meconium which could mean that the baby is not coping with the labour
- Sometimes you may have to transfer after the birth, for example, if there are problems with delivering the placenta, if you bleed more heavily than normal afterwards or there are concerns about the baby's breathing patterns

You are more likely to be transferred if you having your first baby (see <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace>). Your midwife will discuss these possibilities with you when you are making your decision about where to give birth. In the event of a transfer, your midwife will arrange an ambulance which will transfer you to the Delivery Suite at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford. Your midwife will accompany you in the ambulance, providing any emergency care with the assistance of a paramedic. **Your partner will need to arrange his/her own transport.**

If the transfer occurs after the birth, a separate ambulance may have to be arranged for the baby. Please have a baby care seat ready in case it is needed. If you have other children, please arrange for child care in the event of a transfer to hospital.

Shropshire is a large county and transfer times to the Consultant Led Unit in Telford vary. Please see your Pregnancy Information Book for current estimated transfer times.

What happens after my baby is born at home?

Many women really enjoy skin to skin contact with their baby immediately following the birth. Cuddling your baby close to you, helps you to get to know your baby and can help with successful breastfeeding.

Your midwife will check you and your baby following the birth and will probably leave within 2 hours afterwards if all is well. Depending on the time of the birth, a midwife will visit later in the day or the following day. **Do not hesitate to call for help and advice if you have concerns before the next visit.** Within 72 hours of the birth, a more detailed examination of the baby will be carried out by a midwife trained in neonatal examinations or by your GP. Your midwife will arrange this. Further visits will also be arranged during the first few days.

If you need any stitches your midwife will usually be able to suture the tear. However, if the tear is more complex you may need to be transferred to hospital for repair by a doctor in theatre.

Midwife Led Units contact numbers for home births

- Shrewsbury 01743 261216
- Wrekin 01952 565706

Other sources of information

- **NHS Choices:** The UK's biggest health website, certified as a reliable source of health information: www.nhs.uk
- **Patient:** Evidence based information on a wide range of medical and health topics. <https://patient.info/>
- **National Childbirth Trust:** <https://www.nct.org.uk/>

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

Your information: Information about you and your healthcare is held by the NHS. You can find out more about how we hold your information and how it is used on our website and in your Pregnancy Information Book.



I confirm I have received information on the home birth service provided by Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date ____/____/____

Print and sign on both pages one to be retained in the woman's pregnancy health record.

Information produced by: Women and Children's Care Group
Home Birth Patient Information Leaflet Version 6

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