

Having a baby at...



# Home

You know your home.  
You know it's comfortable and familiar.  
It's the place where you feel secure and relaxed.

Your home might be where you want to be for  
the birth of your baby – with family,  
friends and your midwife.

## Can anyone choose a home birth?

There are no laws, rules or regulations that say that you have to go into hospital or a birth centre to have your baby. In fact, the Government has recently said that women should have as much choice as possible about where they would like their baby to be born.

The community midwives who work out of Chesterfield Royal Hospital support women who want to consider a home birth. They will provide advice and information to anyone who wants to think about a home birth option.

If you think a home birth is for you, speak to your midwife.

## Are home births safe?

For many women a home birth is a safe option. A home birth is suitable for women who are considered 'low-risk' – who start in labour by themselves, after 37 weeks of pregnancy and who have had a normal pregnancy. A home birth choice should be made around the circumstances of the individual 'mum-to-be'.

Your midwife may feel there are good reasons why a home birth may not be in your best interest. For example, if you have a history of complications in a previous pregnancy or are expecting more than one baby, a home birth would not be recommended.

If your midwife thinks a home birth is not right for you, she will explain why.

## What if it is my first baby?

There is no reason why first-time mothers cannot have a home birth. There is no evidence that you would put yourself or your baby at greater risk by opting for a home birth, if your pregnancy is normal and you have no health problems.

## Who will be at the birth?

Your midwife may visit you once, twice, or more during the early stages of your labour. Once your labour is established, she will stay with you and will call a colleague to help during the birth itself.

You will probably have your partner with you, or a birthing partner (a close relative or friend). Who else is present is up to you – as it's your home – but too many people may make you feel anxious.



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## Will I need any special equipment?

Your midwife will bring all the equipment she needs. You don't need to provide very much, but you should ensure your home is warm. You will need:

- Plastic sheets to protect your bed and carpet;
- Warm towels and warm clothes for your baby;
- A bright lamp so the midwife can see what she's doing; and
- A packed overnight bag, including baby clothes, in case you need to be transferred to hospital.

If you would like to use a birthing pool, these are available for hire. Your midwife will be able to advise you.

## What benefits does a home birth offer?

- You will be in a familiar, relaxing and private environment.
- You will have one to one care from a midwife.
- You can choose who you want there during labour, so if you want your other children around that is fine.
- You may feel more in control at home.
- After your baby is born, you can get into your own bath and your own bed.

## Are there any disadvantages?

- You will not have access to a full range of pain relief-pethidine or an epidural are not available.
- You will not be offered continuous fetal heart monitoring during labour, or an assisted delivery with forceps or ventouse.
- You will have to transfer to hospital if there are complications.
- In an emergency, there is obviously no facility for birth by caesarean section and no special care baby unit. However, our midwives are skilled in life-support and resuscitation techniques and in managing emergency situations.

## What if there are problems during labour?

If there are complications during your labour, your midwife will recommend that you go to hospital. You will be transferred to Chesterfield Royal Hospital by ambulance with your midwife. The transfer time will depend on where you live.

If an independent midwife (see page 4) is caring for you it is unlikely she will be able to assist you at the hospital, although she can remain with you as a supporter.

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## Does it cost anything?

No. Home births are provided through NHS maternity services. Our community midwifery service is part of Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and a home birth is free.

Alternatively, you can hire an independent midwife to provide your care during the ante-natal period and your home birth. This costs between £1,500 and £4,000. To find out more, contact the Independent Midwives Association: [www.independentmidwives.org.uk](http://www.independentmidwives.org.uk)

## I had a complicated pregnancy and birth with my last baby - is a home birth not an option for me this time?

Previous complications do not always mean you are unable to have a home birth. Speak to your midwife to discuss your circumstances.

## What happens afterwards?

Once your baby is born and the placenta (also known as the afterbirth) is safely delivered, the midwives will probably leave you and your partner alone with the baby for a while. We encourage skin

to skin contact with your baby at this time. If you need any stitches, these will be done by your midwife as soon as you are ready.

Your midwife will check and weigh your baby and help you with your first breastfeed, clear up any mess and see you into bed. A midwife will always stay for around an hour after the placenta has been delivered, and when she leaves she will take away any clinical waste from the birth.

Your midwife or another community midwife will visit you over the next few days to perform the newborn examination, to see how you are progressing and to help with any feeding problems.

## Decision-making:

Deciding where to have your baby – at home, at Darley Birth Centre or in hospital – is one of the most important decisions you will ever make.

You will need to think about the benefits and risks of all the choices. Speak to your partner, family members, your midwife and friends – and get their views and opinions. Remember though, the final decision is yours and you should not feel pressured into making a choice because someone else wants you to.



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**Make sure you ask lots of questions about home births – so you have a full picture about how they work and you clearly understand what is available to you. These are some of the things you might want to know:**

**Do you offer home births in my area?**

**Do you accept women of my age for home birth?**

**How many home births are done each year?**

**How many first-time mothers book with you for a home birth?**

**How many women transfer to hospital because of complications?**

**Do I have to be registered with a local GP practice to have a home birth?**

**Have you any endorsements or comments from women who have had home births?**

**What if I develop a problem during pregnancy?**

**What if I book to have a home birth and then change my mind?**

**Will I have one-to-one care from a midwife throughout labour?**

**Will I know the midwife?**

**When should I call the midwife?**

**Can my family or children be at the birth?**

**Do you ever induce labour for a home birth?**

**How would you monitor my baby during labour?**

**What pain relief is available?**

**What would happen if there are problems during labour – would I be transferred straight away?**

**What if my baby has problems at birth?**

**What methods would you use to speed up labour, for example: breaking the waters?**

**Are complementary therapies available and are they practised by qualified midwives?**

**Can I eat and drink during labour?**

**Is there a birthing pool available?**

**Can I deliver my baby into water?**

**What help will I get with breastfeeding and looking after my baby?**

**Do you have any recognised awards for commitment to breastfeeding?**

**Will a midwife still visit me after a home birth?**

**If I want to book a home birth what do I need to do?**

Speak to your midwife for more advice and information about your individual circumstances and suitability for this option.



Chesterfield Royal Hospital **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Calow, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 5BL. Telephone: 01246 277271 Online: [www.chesterfieldroyal.nhs.uk](http://www.chesterfieldroyal.nhs.uk)