

Home Birth in Lothian

Information for Patients

Home Birth in Lothian

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about having your baby at home, and to support you to make a choice about where to have your baby. Your midwife will be happy to have a discussion with you about having a home birth, and answer any questions you may have.

What are the benefits of having a home birth?

A familiar environment - you do not need to leave your home, and can labour in comfortable surroundings. This may help you to feel more relaxed and in control during the birth.

The midwife will come to your home and provide labour care.

Your birth partners will be with you in your own home.

You are less likely to have medical interventions when you labour at home.

You don't have to travel to hospital in labour and you can get straight into your own bed after you give birth.

Women who have a home birth report a better birth experience than women who birth in hospital.

What are the disadvantages of having a home birth?

A situation may arise where the midwife will recommend transfer to hospital. This may be if you need more pain relief, if there are concerns about you or your baby, or if you decide you would like to go to hospital.

If the midwife has concerns about you or your baby during labour, they will recommend transferring you into hospital. Transferring in the later stages of your labour can sometimes be distressing or traumatic, and have a potentially negative impact on your labour and birth experience.

Depending on where you live and the reason for transferring to hospital, waiting for an ambulance and travel time to the hospital could take an extended period of time.

The midwife will leave your home after the birth of your baby, once you and the baby are settled. If you require any care or support after the midwife has left you will need to contact the hospital.

A home birth could be a good option for you if:

- You are pregnant with one baby
- Your labour begins naturally between 37-42 weeks of pregnancy
- Your baby's head is positioned downwards
- You are healthy during pregnancy and at the onset of labour
- You have had previous healthy pregnancies (if this is not your first baby)
- Your home has enough space and easy access

You always have a choice to request a home birth, no matter what your circumstances are, or your health in pregnancy. However, you may be advised to give birth in hospital, where there is access to close monitoring and medical attention, in case you need it.

Who will look after you at your home birth?

At your home birth you will be looked after by the midwife on-call that day or night. Having a home birth does not guarantee having the same midwife throughout your labour and birth. Depending on the time of day, or if you have a long labour, the midwife looking after you may have to hand over to the next midwife on-call. The midwife will monitor both you and your baby's wellbeing during labour and birth. Midwives are experts in normal birth and if any concerns arise about you or your baby the midwife will discuss this with you, and may recommend transfer to hospital.

What pain relief options are available?

There are various pain relief options available to use at home. These include relaxation techniques, being mobile and moving around, massage, aromatherapy, TENS machine, and support from birth partners. You can also hire a birthing pool and use water as a pain relief option. If you would like to have a birthing pool you must arrange this yourself.

The midwife will provide 'gas and air'; which is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide that you inhale to ease the pain.

What will happen if I need stitches?

The midwife may be able to give you stitches at home, or they may recommend transferring you to the hospital for this to be done.

Will there be a mess?

There is not usually a lot of mess but you can lay down plastic sheets over and around the area you wish to labour in. The midwife has some disposable pads that can also be used. All the clinical waste will be disposed of by the midwife.

What equipment is needed for the birth?

Your midwife will talk to you about the equipment needed for your home birth. Some equipment is provided by the hospital, and will be delivered to your house. This includes 'gas and air', oxygen cylinders, and medical equipment. Your midwife can help and advise you on what to prepare for your home birth.

What happens after the birth?

The midwives will stay with you for around 2 hours after the birth of your baby. You will have a postnatal visit from your midwife later that day or the following day.

Will I need to transfer to hospital during labour?

If complications arise for you or your baby the midwife will recommend transferring into the hospital. If a hospital transfer is required this will be by ambulance. Your midwife will accompany you in the ambulance, and your birth partner will be asked to follow separately.

The Birthplace study¹ found that if this is your first baby, there is a 45% chance of transferring from home to hospital. If you have had a baby before, there is a much smaller likelihood of transferring into hospital.

What next?

If you are thinking about having a home birth, your midwife will be happy to discuss this with you at your next antenatal appointment. If you decide to have a home birth you will be given further information. This will include a discussion about your birthing preferences, and your midwife will arrange a home visit to help you prepare your home.

Useful links and resources are available on the NHS Lothian Maternity Services website.

¹ Hollowell J, Puddicombe D, Rowe R, Linsell L, Hardy P, Stewart M, et al. The Birthplace National Prospective Cohort Study: *Perinatal and Maternal Outcomes by Planned Place of Birth*. Birthplace in England Research Programme. Final report part 4. London: NIHR Service Delivery and Organisation programme; 2011.