Home Birth
or
Hospital Birth

Information to help you decide whether you would prefer a home birth or a hospital birth
Did you know that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust can offer you a choice?

To help you make this important decision this leaflet explains what your local Maternity Services can offer and what issues you should consider when making your choice.

Your midwife and doctor will also be able to advise you.

Can anyone have a home birth?

As long as your pregnancy is uncomplicated and you are healthy, you should be able to have a home birth. If you’ve had a baby before, and the birth was complicated, you may be advised to have your next baby in hospital. Research has found that home birth is as safe as hospital birth for healthy women having a straightforward pregnancy. You should discuss your choices with your GP or midwife, we are all here to help you make the right decision for you and your baby.

You may choose to have your baby at home however your doctor or midwife may advise that it's better for you to give birth in hospital. They will explain the reasons for this. You will be offered the opportunity to discuss your wishes and plans in detail, and you will be given information from your doctor or midwife about your care. Detailed plans will be made to ensure that everything possible is in place for your safety and your baby’s safety.
What are the benefits of a home birth?

1. You will know and be familiar with your midwife. She will have provided your pregnancy care either at your local clinic or in your own home.

2. You will be enabled to labour and deliver your baby in the familiar and relaxed surroundings of your own home.

3. A range of pain relief options are available if needed including relaxation techniques, hydrotherapy, gas and air and pethidine injection. Women are less likely to need strong pain relief at home.

4. If you have your baby at home you are more likely to have care from a midwife you know and to have a midwife stay with you throughout your labour.

5. Medical interventions are less likely at home.

6. Your partner can stay with you at all times after the birth regardless of delivery time.

7. If you have other children, they won’t be restricted to visiting times, and you are likely to have fewer childminding problems.

8. When women, who had both hospital and home births, were asked which they birth location they preferred, the great majority said they preferred their home birth. (See References)

9. Women having a home birth tend to feel more in control and more relaxed.
If you choose to have a home birth, it is important to be flexible and understand that complications can arise, and you may need to be transferred to hospital for the birth of your baby. You may also need to be transferred to hospital should you request pain relief (such as an epidural) that can not be provided at home.

The Community Midwifery Team provide your care for a home birth. A midwife will come to your home when you are in labour and monitor and assist you, until you give birth to your baby. She will call on the assistance of a second midwife to join her for the birth as ideally two midwives should be with you when your baby is born. Should complications develop during your labour or following your delivery, she will advise you of the need and importance of transferring your care to hospital for the safety of you and your baby and ensure that arrangements are made for this to happen.

**What equipment will I need?**

A few weeks before your due date, your midwife will bring a birthing pack to your home. This pack will contain all the items that the midwife will require for the birth of your baby. If you wish to use a birthing pool, you must arrange the hire or purchase of this. Please ask your midwife for information.

**What happens after the birth?**

If all is well following the birth, the midwives will check your baby and weigh him/her. Your midwife will help you with the baby’s first feed whether you are hoping to breast feed or bottle feed. Should complications arise following the birth, your midwife will
advise you of the need to be transferred to hospital, if for example, you require stitches or your placenta does not deliver easily.

Your midwife will stay with you until she is happy that you are comfortable and well. She will visit you over the following days and monitor both you and your baby’s progress following the birth. Your GP will also visit you and give your baby a thorough check up.

Once your midwife is satisfied that you are both making satisfactory progress, she will transfer your care to your Health Visitor.

Where can I get more Information?

Your midwife or Doctor will provide information and support to enable you to make your decision.

A Supervisor of Midwives is also available to advise you, should you need additional support. Supervisors of Midwives are experienced midwives who are responsible for monitoring the quality and safety of local maternity care.

A Supervisor is contactable through the Southern Health and Social Care Trust switch board, Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm on Tel: 028 3834 4444.
Additional information can be obtained from:

There is also a Home Birth Support Group organised by NCT. You can meet women who have had home births and get answers to some of the questions you may have. For more details contact Seána Talbot on Tel: 078 55 473 439.

Association for Improvements in Maternity Services
Helpline Tel: 087 0765 1433
www.aims.org.uk

Midwives Information and Resource Service (MIDIRS)
Freephone Tel: 0800 581 009
www.infochoice.org

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)
Enquiry Line: 030 0330 0770
www.nct.org.uk

Royal College of Midwives
Belfast Office
Tel: 028 9024 1531
www.rcm.org.uk

Local Supervising Authority Midwifery Officer (LSAMO)
Contact: Verena Wallace, Public Health Agency NI
Tel: 028 9031 1611
www.publichealth.hscni.net

Home Birth Association of Ireland
Tel: 00353 9064 05267
www.homebirth.ie
References

1. The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) support home birth for women with uncomplicated pregnancies. There is no reason why home birth should not be offered to women at low risk of complications and it may confer considerable benefits for them and their families. There is ample evidence showing that labouring at home increases a woman's likelihood of a birth that is both satisfying and safe, with implications for her health and that of her baby. RCOG website, Dec 2010. www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/home-births

2. Studies into women's descriptions of home birth experiences have produced qualitative data on increased sense of control, empowerment and self esteem, and an overwhelming preference for home birth. RCOG website, Dec 2010.

References taken from www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/home-births