

# Choosing where to give birth to your baby

Information and advice for women

## *Maternity*

We are pleased you have chosen our services to assist you through your pregnancy, birth and into parenthood. You will have lots of information to think about over the next few months in how you manage your pregnancy – we are here to help you.

One of the things we know is very important to expectant parents is the place where you will give birth to your baby. At our Trust we have a wide range of choices for you to consider and this leaflet will make those clear to you.

### **Where can I give birth?**

If your pregnancy and labour are low risk you can give birth in:

- Your home
- The Halcyon Birth Centre on Oldbury Road in Smethwick
- The Serenity Birth Centre at City Hospital
- The Delivery Suite at City Hospital

If your pregnancy and labour are high risk you can give birth in:

- The Delivery Suite at City Hospital

When you first meet your midwife she will assess your medical and social history; this will help you in making choices about your place of birth.

### **What is a low risk pregnancy and labour?**

Low risk pregnancies are when you do not have any long-term or serious medical problems or infections and have not had any problems during pregnancy or birth before. Your midwife will assess this at the start of your pregnancy. If your pregnancy is low risk you do not need to see a consultant (specialist pregnancy doctor) during your pregnancy and will be cared for by midwives. Your midwife will do another assessment at 36 weeks of your pregnancy. If you have not had any problems during pregnancy you will still be low risk.

When you go into labour your midwife will do another assessment. Low risk labours are when:

- You have not had any problems in pregnancy .
- You are 37 – 42 weeks in your pregnancy.
- Your BMI is less than 35 at the start of your pregnancy.
- You are 16 – 40 years old.
- You are not anaemic (the level of iron in your blood isn't low).
- Your baby has developed normally and is lying head down.
- Your waters break and they are clear in colour.
- You have contractions that are regular and strong when labour starts.

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### **What is a high risk pregnancy and labour?**

High risk pregnancies and labours are when there is a problem during your pregnancy or labour that needs treatment. If your midwife thinks you may be high risk she will discuss this with you and may ask you to see a consultant for their opinion. The consultant may then decide that you are low risk and can continue to have your care led by your midwife, or may decide that you are high risk and need specialist care from a consultant.

### **Giving birth at home**

Evidence shows that a home birth is as safe as a hospital birth for healthy women having a straightforward pregnancy; it also shows that you will have less chance of an episiotomy (cut to the perineum) and a caesarean section. For most women and their partners the major concern about having their baby at home is that a medical emergency may occur. You can discuss with your midwives what arrangements are in place if a problem rises.

The midwife is trained and equipped to deal with most problems; for instance, she will have drugs to stop heavy bleeding after the birth and can resuscitate a baby that is slow to breathe. The most common problem is a long labour where the mother or baby gets tired and progress slows. Transfer to hospital may be needed. But women who started to have their baby at home and needed to transfer say that they valued having spent even part of their labour at home.

A first-time mother has a 70% chance of achieving a home birth (although this rate varies widely in different areas). For women who have already had a baby, the chance is much higher – between 88 and 99% of women. There is a small chance (about 1 in 30) of having to be transferred to hospital after the baby has been born, usually because of problems with the delivery of the placenta, or sometimes because of concern about the baby's breathing.

When you choose to have a homebirth the midwife will visit you at home when you are 36 weeks pregnant to make sure you are well prepared and have all the information you need. She will give you numbers for contacting the midwife and explain what you can expect during labour. She will also explain about what pain relief you can use and how to access that.

When you suspect you labour is starting you will call the midwife and she will assess you to confirm your stage of labour. Your midwife will stay with you when she is sure that you are in the active stage of labour, monitoring you and your baby. She will call another person to assist at the birth and they will both remain with you until you and she are happy that everything is as it should be.

After the birth you will have further visits from the midwife and she will advise you on how you and your baby are recovering. You may have other people to provide services such as hearing screening, breastfeeding advice and general follow up care.

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If there is a problem with you or your baby during labour or after birth, your midwife will arrange for an ambulance to take you to City Hospital and she will go with you.

### **What are the benefits of giving birth at home?**

- You will feel more in control of your labour and will have a more positive birth experience. Women who have had a positive birth experience are more likely to breastfeed successfully.
- You will feel more relaxed in the familiar environment.
- Your birth partner(s) can stay with you throughout the birth and afterwards.
- You can have as many birth supporters as you wish, provided that there is enough space for the midwife to care for you properly.
- You will need less strong pain relief in labour because you will be more relaxed and in control.
- You are less likely to need help to deliver your baby, such as a cut to the area between your vagina and anus, or help with forceps.

### **What are the risks of giving birth at home?**

- Some women giving birth at home need to be transferred to the Delivery Suite at City Hospital because of a problem with their labour or their baby, or because they need additional pain relief. This happens to 4 – 5 out of 10 women having their first baby, and 1 – 2 out of 10 women who have given birth before.
- If you are having your first baby at home there is a higher risk of your baby developing a serious problem during labour or birth. This happens to 9 – 10 out of 1000 of these babies, compared to 3 – 5 out of 1000 babies born in hospital. If you have given birth before, the risk of your baby developing a serious problem is the same if you give birth in a birth centre, hospital or at home (4 out of 1000).

If you are worried about how you will cope with the pain, or worried that there will be a complication, please talk to your midwife. You might also like to have a look at the booklet 'Labour: What happens and how it can be managed' for information on pain relief.

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### **Giving birth in a birth centre**

Our Serenity and Halcyon Birth centres are small units which offer a comfortable environment where birth is treated as a normal process and in a less clinical way. Birth centres are a suitable place for women who are 'low risk' to give birth.

Our birth centres are staffed by experienced midwives and midwifery care assistants, who are the best people to care for you when you have a low risk pregnancy and birth. There are no doctors in the birth centres.

#### **Serenity Birth Centre**

The Serenity Birth Centre is a 'Co-located Birth Centre'. This means that it is run by midwives and there are no doctors on the unit, but it is in the same building as the Delivery Suite at City Hospital where there are doctors and facilities for high-risk births.

If there is a problem with you or baby during labour you will be assessed and transferred to the Delivery Suite which is down the corridor.

#### **The facilities at Serenity Birth Centre**

Serenity Birth Centre has 5 birthing rooms which are all decorated to have a modern, homely and relaxing feel. Each room has:

- A birth pool which is either fixed in place or inflatable
- A pull-down double bed
- A wooden crib for your baby
- A wooden changing station for your baby
- Mood lighting that you can control
- A flat screen TV which has Freeview
- An ensuite bathroom

The Birth Centre also has:

- Birthing stools, birth balls and birthing mats
- A therapy room where our midwives can offer you aromatherapy
- A shared kitchen where you can prepare your own drinks and refreshments
- A decked garden
- A waiting area and toilet for visitors

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### **Halcyon Birth Centre**

The Halcyon birth centre is a 'Stand Alone Birth Centre'. This means that it is run by midwives and is not on the same site as any hospital-based maternity care. No doctors work at this centre or are on the same site. The Halcyon Birth Centre is on Oldbury Road, Smethwick, B66 1JE and is on the same site as Leasowes Intermediate Care Centre.

If there is a problem with you or baby during labour you will be assessed and your midwife will arrange for an ambulance to take you to the Delivery Suite at City Hospital, and will go with you.

### **The facilities at Halcyon Birth Centre**

Halcyon Birth Centre has 3 birthing rooms which are all decorated to have a modern, homely and relaxing feel. Each room has:

- A birth pool which has lighting in it
- A pull-down double bed
- A wooden crib for your baby
- A wooden changing station for your baby
- Mood lighting that you can control
- A flat screen TV which has Freeview
- An iPod docking station
- An ensuite bathroom
- Access to a shared sensory garden

The Birth Centre also has:

- Birthing stools, birth balls and birthing mats
- A therapy room where our midwives can offer you aromatherapy
- A shared kitchen where you can prepare your own drinks and refreshments
- A waiting area and toilet for visitors

### **What pain relief is available in the birth centres?**

Your midwife will be with you at all times during your labour in the birth centre, supporting and helping you. They can also offer you the following methods of pain relief:

- Gas and air (entonox)
- Birth pools
- Aromatherapy and other complementary techniques such as hypnobirthing
- Pethidine injections

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- Equipment such as birthing stools, mats and balls to help you find comfortable positions

You can also use your own TENS unit during early labour.

We are not able to provide epidural pain relief in the birth centres. If you plan to have an epidural you will be booked to have your baby on the Delivery Suite at City Hospital. If you find you need an epidural whilst you are in labour in one of the birth centres, you will be taken to the Delivery Suite at City Hospital.

For more information about the methods of pain relief available to you please see our leaflet 'Labour: What happens and how it can be managed'.

## **After you have given birth**

After your baby has been born you will stay in the birth centre for a couple of hours. Most women are home within 8 hours of giving birth if it is their first baby, and quicker if they have given birth before. Your midwife will check that you and your baby are well and will make sure that you are happy with how your baby is feeding and responding to you. Once you and your midwife are happy, you will be discharged home with your new baby and will then be seen by a midwife at home in the next couple of days.

If you need to stay in hospital longer, you and your baby will be moved to the postnatal ward at City Hospital.

## **What are the benefits of giving birth in a birth centre?**

- The environment of a birth centre gives women more positive birth experiences because it is relaxed and homely. Women who have had a positive birth experience are more likely to breastfeed successfully.
- You will need less strong pain relief in labour because of the environment you are in, the facilities available to help you and the support of your midwife.
- You are less likely to need help to deliver your baby, such as a cut to the area between your vagina and anus, or help with forceps because you will be encouraged to walk and move around during your labour. Being upright and moving around can help you feel more comfortable and makes the most of gravity to help things along.
- Your birth partner(s) can stay with you throughout the birth and one partner can stay with you after the birth until you are ready to go home.
- You can have several birth supporters if you wish, but please check how many can be in the room with your midwife first, as there is limited room.

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### **What are the risks of giving birth in a Birth Centre?**

Some women giving birth in a Birth Centre need to be transferred to the Delivery Suite at City Hospital because of a problem with their labour or their baby, or because they need additional pain relief. This happens to 3 – 4 out of 10 women having their first baby, and less than 2 out of 10 women who have given birth before.

If you are worried about how you will cope with the pain, or worried that there will be a complication, please talk to your midwife. You might also like to have a look at the booklet 'Labour: What happens and how it can be managed' for information on pain relief. You may also like to come and visit one of the Birth Centres.

## **Giving birth on the Delivery Suite**

Most women are familiar with delivery suites or labour wards; they are areas providing a package of care by a team of trained maternity staff. Midwives, obstetricians (doctors) anaesthetists and theatre staff work together to provide care for women who need a team approach. This is sometimes called combined care. This type of care benefits women who have problems either with their own health or the current pregnancy. There are many reasons why delivery suite would be suggested as the best place for you to give birth; you will be able to discuss those reasons individually with your consultant and midwife.

At the entrance to delivery suite is the Triage area. This is the first place that meets you in the entrance to delivery suite. Triage is like an emergency department where women with problems in their pregnancy, are assessed as high risk and suspect they are in labour come in for assessment. The Triage department is usually very busy and you will be seen and assessed depending upon your reasons for attending.

At City hospital there are 10 labour rooms with similar facilities in each. These generally consist of monitoring equipment for you and your baby during labour, lots of room to move around if you are able and a midwife who will be with you through your labour. The rooms are self-contained but not all have ensuite facilities, the midwife will advise you when you are in your room what facilities there are.

You will be more likely to use delivery suite if you have:

- Diabetes, high blood pressure or other diseases that affect pregnancy
- Your baby has not grown well during the pregnancy
- You have had a previous birth that was complicated such as a caesarean
- Your pregnancy is over your due date by 12-14 days

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There is a small induction of labour suite where women stay during the procedure of starting labour off. There is a high dependency unit with 2 beds where midwives who are trained to care for sick women during and immediately after birth; this is supported by other team members too. There are 2 theatres where caesarean sections can be performed and 2 recovery areas after any surgery.

If you have suffered a stillbirth or your baby is not expected to survive the birth you will be cared for in our Bereavement Suite along the corridor on delivery suite. This is a uniquely designed area that allows families to be together with their baby for as long as they feel the need. Our bereavement services and staff will assist you at this sad time.

The disadvantages to giving birth on delivery suite are generally associated with having procedures such as episiotomy, use of drugs, epidural and caesarean section. If your labour is managed then it is often more difficult for nature to take control unlike when you are at home or in a place such as a birth centre. If you are worried or confused about your care we are happy to help in whatever way we can so that your birth experience will be what you wish it to be.

## **What happens when I have chosen where to have my baby?**

Your midwife will talk to you about your options for where to give birth and will book your choice for you. She will then confirm this with you when you are 36 weeks pregnant. When you think you are in labour, or if you have any problems and are worried, please call Maternity Triage for advice.

## **Contact details**

**Maternity Triage**  
0121 507 4181

## **Further information**

If you have any questions about any of our facilities or would like a tour of them, please speak to your community midwife.

For more information about pregnancy, birth and our maternity services please visit the maternity pages of our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).



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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- The Royal College of Midwives, 'Evidence Based Guidelines for Midwifery-Led Care in Labour: Birth environment', November 2012
- NHS National Institute for Health Research, 'The birthplace national prospective cohort study: perinatal and maternal outcomes by planned place of birth', November 2011
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, CG55 'Intrapartum care: management and delivery of care to women in labour', September 2007
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists & Royal College of Midwives, Joint statement No.2 'Home births', April 2007

This leaflet is also available in other languages. Please scan this QR code to read the leaflet in your preferred language.



If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5303 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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