

Birth choices for low risk women

Information and advice for women and families

Maternity



Where
EVERYONE
Matters

Congratulations

You are to become new parents. At Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust 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 you have a wide range of choices for you to consider and this leaflet will make those clear to you

Who are 'low risk' women?

LOW RISK Pregnancy

At the start of your pregnancy the midwife will make an assessment of your previous medical and pregnancy history. If you do not have any past history of problems she will state that you are LOW RISK and will be suitable for midwife-led care and do not need to see a consultant (specialist pregnancy doctor) during your pregnancy.

This means that you will be suitable to give birth at one of the following places:

- Your home (ask your midwife for more information)
- Serenity Midwifery Led Birth Centre (City Hospital)
- Halcyon Stand Alone Birth Centre (Oldbury Road, Smethwick)

Risk Assessment

Because we consider the care of you and your baby to be important we risk assess your pregnancy continually. At 36 weeks the midwife will check that your pregnancy has been uneventful. If she and you are happy then she will state you are LOW RISK and you can continue to give birth under the care of the midwife.

LOW RISK labour

- You will be designated as LOW RISK when you go into labour if you:
- Have had an uncomplicated 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 of age
- You are not anaemic (iron level is 9gms or above)
- Your baby has developed normally and is head down
- Your waters break and they are clear in colour
- You have contractions that are regular and strong when labour starts

If at any point during your pregnancy the midwife has a concern she will discuss this with you and ask you to see someone who might be a consultant for an opinion. If all is well you will stay LOW RISK, however if the problem means that your pregnancy needs further treatment or there might be a problem during labour you will be put under the care of a consultant - your pregnancy is then HIGH RISK.

What is a birth centre?

Birth centres are small midwifery units which are staffed and run by experienced midwives. They offer a comfortable environment where birth is treated as a normal process and in a less clinical way.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has two birth centres; The Serenity Midwifery-Led Birth Centre and the new Halcyon Birth Centre, which is due to open in Autumn 2011. These birth centres are suitable for women who assessed as **LOW RISK**.

Both are staffed by midwives and midwifery care assistants. There are no doctors in the birth centres. A midwife is the best person to care for you when you have a normal low risk pregnancy and birth. Midwives have had 3 years of training concentrating on understanding and becoming expert in normal pregnancy and birth. Your midwife will support you with your labour and encourage you to give birth in the best way for your body and baby. They are also able to recognise when there is a problem and get the right help for you and your baby.

Security at both centres is controlled by staff and each birth centre has its own secure entrance.



Reception at the Serenity Birth Centre

Our Birth Centres

Serenity Midwifery-Led Birth Centre

The Serenity Midwifery-Led Unit is a **'Co-located Birth Centre'** (CBC). This means that it is run by midwives and no doctors work on the unit, but it is on the same site as the hospital delivery suite where there are doctors and facilities for high-risk births.

Serenity is in the Maternity Building at City Hospital. 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.

Facilities at Serenity

- 5 ensuite birthing rooms. Each room is decorated to have a modern, homely, relaxing feel
- 1 room with a fixed pool, 3 with birth pools in a box – these are inflatable birthing pools similar to a large deep paddling pool
- Drop-down double beds in all rooms
- Wooden crib for baby and a matching changing station
- Mood lighting in each room that is controlled by you
- Flat screen TVs in all rooms which have Freeview TV
- Birthing stools, birth balls, birthing mats
- Therapy room where aromatherapy is available
- Shared kitchen where you can prepare your own drinks and refreshments
- Decked Serenity Garden
- Reception area
- Visitors waiting area & toilet

Halcyon Birth Centre

The Halcyon birth centre is a **'Stand Alone Birth Centre'** (SABC). 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. If there is a problem with you or baby during labour you will be assessed and transferred by ambulance with a midwife to City Hospital Delivery Suite.

The Halcyon birth centre is on Oldbury Road in Smethwick and is due to open in Autumn 2011.

Facilities at Halcyon

- 3 ensuite birthing rooms. Each room is decorated to have a modern, homely, relaxing feel
- Fixed underlit birth pools in each room
- Hidden away double beds in all rooms
- Wooden crib for baby and a matching changing station
- Mood lighting that is controlled by you
- Flat screen TVs in all rooms which have Freeview TV
- iPod docking station
- Birthing stools, birth balls, birthing mats
- Therapy and consultation room
- Space for dining and relaxing
- Shared kitchen where you can prepare your own drinks and refreshments
- Sensory garden which can be accessed from each birthing room
- Reception area, with seating and secure access
- Ambulance bay when assistance is called for transfer

What pain relief is available in the birth centres?

- Water (birth pools)
- Alternative positions using the birthing stools, balls, mats and bean bags
- Aromatherapy and other complementary techniques
- Entonox (gas and air)
- Pethidine injections
- You can also use your TENS unit during early labour

You will also have the midwife with you at all times supporting you and helping you throughout labour.

We are not able to provide epidural pain relief in the birth centres. Many women are surprised at how well they can cope in labour with support and by using the methods of pain relief listed above. If you choose 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 the midwife will transfer you to City Hospital.



For more information about the methods of pain relief available to you please see our leaflets 'Labour: What happens and how it can be managed' and 'Giving birth in water', which can be found on our website.

After you have given birth

Normally you will stay in the birth centre for a couple of hours after the birth of your baby. The midwife will check that you and your baby are well and ensure you are happy with how your baby is feeding and responding to you. Once the midwife and you are happy she will give you information how to contact someone if you are concerned but you will receive ongoing care from a midwife when you get home, usually starting the next day.

If you need to stay longer, once the birth is over you will be transferred to City Hospital where we have postnatal facilities. Most women are home within 8 hours if it is their first baby and quicker if they have given birth before.

Benefits of giving birth in our birth centres

- **You will need less strong pain relief in labour** because of the support of the midwife, the environment you are in and the facilities available to help you through your labour.
- **You are more likely to be upright during labour and birth** as you will be encouraged to walk and move around during your labour. This helps a great deal in progressing your labour as lying on a bed is usually uncomfortable and does not make the most of gravity to help things along.
- **You are more likely to have a normal birth** – because you will need less strong pain relief and are more likely to be upright and mobile, you will be doing everything to help yourself, giving you the best chance of having a normal birth.
- **You are more likely to have a waterbirth if you would like one.** Pools are ready for you when you arrive. Being in water helps you to be in comfortable positions for labour.
- **You are less likely to need an episiotomy (cut to perineum).** We

know that women who are active in their labour, when it comes to pushing their baby out are more likely to do this naturally without much help. This can reduce the pressure on the tissue and make a cut less likely.

- **You are more likely to establish breastfeeding** and breastfeed successfully if you have had a positive birth experience. Women using birth centres often describe their birth experiences as positive.
- **You can have as many birth supporters as you wish** and your family can be with you throughout the birth, but please check with the midwife first as there is limited room.
- **You will be able to have a partner stay with you** after the birth until you are ready to go home.
- **During labour you are able to use both aromatherapy and hypnobirthing in our Birth Centres.** All of our midwives are familiar with the benefits of these techniques and will be happy to support you.
- **The environment of a birth centre gives women more positive birth experiences.**



Birthing room at the Serenity Birth-Centre

Risks of giving birth in a birth centre

1 in 4 women transfer from a birth centre to a hospital maternity unit for either a problem with labour or their newborn baby.

The risk of an actual emergency transfer is low, many women transfer for additional pain relief or because their labour has slowed down.

If a problem develops during labour you will be transferred to the delivery suite at City Hospital for medical care. If you are in the Serenity Birth Centre the delivery suite is in the same building. If you are in the Halcyon Birth Centre the midwife will arrange for you to transfer by ambulance and she will go with you.

If you are worried about how you will cope with the pain or worried that there will be a complication you should speak to your midwife or you might like to have a look at the 'Labour: What happens and how it can be managed' which you can get from your midwife or our website. You may also like to come and visit one of the Birth Centres.

What happens next?

We are happy to meet with you and show you round our birth centres, just call us on the numbers below to find out what times are available. Tours of the Halcyon birth centre will be available shortly before it opens in Autumn 2011 – keep an eye out for more information.

If you choose to give birth in one of our Birth Centres your midwife will book you directly for the Birth Centre when she has done your booking history and will confirm it when you are 36 weeks pregnant.

Your midwife will give you a number to contact when you go into labour, and someone will advise you what to do next.

Contact details

Serenity Birth Centre 0121 507 5655

Halcyon Birth Centre 0121

For more information about our maternity services, pregnancy and childbirth please visit the Maternity section of our website www.swbh.nhs.uk or speak to your midwife.

For more information about our birth centres contact Kathryn Gutteridge, Consultant Midwife 0121 507 5466 or kathryn.gutteridge1@nhs.net

Please use this space to write down any questions you may have:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Royal College of Midwives, 'Birth centre resource: a practical guide', 2010
- Royal College of Midwives, 'Evidence-based guidelines for midwifery-led care in labour: Birth environment', May 2008
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 'CG55: Intrapartum care', September 2007
- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals, 'Serenity Midwifery-Led Birth Centre Progress Report', September 2010



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals

© Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

ML3336

Issue Date: May 2011

Review Date: May 2013