

# Choosing home birth if you have had a baby before

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## Choosing your place of birth

It is important that you make an informed decision about where you would like to give birth. It is up to you where you have your baby and even after you have decided, you can change your mind. Midwives and doctors will support you in your informed choice of birth setting. At the booking appointment and throughout your pregnancy, your midwife will discuss birthplace options with you, using evidence-based information. The most recent information based on studies in England is outlined in this patient information.

Evidence shows that a healthy woman having a straightforward pregnancy is likely to have fewer interventions and better outcomes if they give birth at home or in a midwife-led unit, compared with an obstetric unit (hospital) (NICE 2014). If you have had a baby before and are having a straightforward pregnancy, planning to birth at home is associated with the best maternal outcomes compared to planning birth in an obstetric unit.

## Straightforward vaginal birth

984 women per 1000 (98%) women planning to give birth at home have a spontaneous vaginal birth, as compared to 980 (98%) in a freestanding midwifery unit (FMU), 967 (97%) in an alongside midwifery unit (AMU) and 927 (93%) in an obstetric unit.

## Transfer rate

115 women per 1000 (12%) may transfer to an obstetric unit. Common reasons for transfer are:

- Request for stronger pain relief
- Slow progress in labour

## Caesarean birth

7 per 1000 women (0.7%) transfer from their planned home birth and go on to have a caesarean birth, as opposed to 35 per 1000 (3.5%) in an obstetric unit.

## Outcomes for baby

2 to 3 babies per 1000 will have a serious medical problem regardless of place of birth. A recent study in *the Lancet* (Reitsma et al., 2020; Hutton et al., 2019) confirmed that for women at a low chance of complications home birth is a safe option for women and their babies.

## Advantages of Home birth

- More likely to feel relaxed in your own home
- More likely to be looked after by a midwife who you have gotten to know during pregnancy
- More likely to have a straightforward labour and birth
- Less likely to experience interventions such as having your waters broken or having a drip to speed up labour
- Less likely to require a pethidine injection or epidural for pain relief
- Less likely to need a caesarean, ventouse or forceps to assist the birth of your baby
- Less likely to need a blood transfusion
- More likely to breastfeed successfully

## Disadvantages of Home birth

- May need to transfer to an obstetric unit during labour or after the baby is born. An emergency blue light transfer is rare
- The time taken to transfer to hospital can lead to a delay in accessing medical care in the rare situation of an emergency
- Water, gas and air and pethidine injections can be accessed at home, however, transfer is required to get stronger pain relief via an epidural

## Transfer to Hospital

Maternity care providers aim to keep to your birth preferences and provide safe care for you and your baby at home. However, sometimes there are reasons why your midwife may suggest to you that it would be better for you and/or your baby if you travel to hospital for further care. It is important to remember that all women who go into labour at home and who are not planning a home birth, transfer in labour to their planned place of birth.

Transfer from a planned home birth normally takes place by ambulance. Emergency (blue-light) transfer is rare. Most transfers are slow, calm and peaceful.

## Possible reasons for transfer

- Signs of infection in mum or baby
- Raised blood pressure
- You request to transfer
- You request an epidural
- Delay in labour
- Significant bleeding
- Baby has passed meconium (opened bowels in the womb)
- Baby has an abnormal heart rate during labour
- Complex perineal tear (the area between the vagina and the anus)
- Retained placenta (where the placenta doesn't come out after the birth)
- Baby required active resuscitation
- Any congenital abnormality

## Some helpful tips if home birth is right for you

- Speak to your community midwife about hiring a birthing pool – water birth is amazing!
- Do you want your pets to be there? If not, you'll need to arrange for them to be looked after
- Have the right food available – for you, your birth partner/s (and for the midwives, if you want to)
- You don't need a huge room, especially if you're not hiring a pool
- Nobody will inspect your house for cleanliness! All homes are suitable for home birth (unless your home is unsafe in some way)
- Make your birth room special by putting up fairy lights and printing out affirmations, if you want to

If you want to know more speak to your community midwife and check out the film about home birth on the Better Births Lincolnshire website.

Lincoln Labour Ward	01522 573889
Lincoln AAC	01522 573138
Pilgrim Labour Ward	01205 445424
Pilgrim AAU	01205 445144

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