

Preparing to Give Birth

Hospital or Home Birth?

Where you give birth is a shared decision between you and your health care provider.

If there are medical concerns, a hospital may be the better choice. If you have a midwife, a home birth may be an option. Talk with your health care provider about the pros and cons of each, and consider your own values and preferences in making your decision.



DID YOU KNOW

If you live in a remote community, you may have to travel to give birth in a hospital.

Your Health Care Support Team

During the birth

If you give birth in a hospital, a nurse will be with you during your labour and delivery. Your health care provider – your doctor or midwife – will be with you during the birth. If you need extra care, an obstetrician, pediatrician or other specialist may also be on hand.

If you give birth at home, your midwife and another attendant will be present.

After the birth

If you had a doctor, they'll give you instructions about follow up once you leave the hospital. You'll also be contacted by a public health nurse.

If you had a midwife, they'll visit you at home often in the first week. For the next 5 weeks, you'll bring your baby to their clinic for visits. After 6 weeks, you and your baby will be back in the care of your usual health care provider and will continue to have the support of a public health nurse.



If you need medical advice after hours, call a HealthLink BC registered nurse at 8-1-1.

Your Personal Support Team



DID YOU KNOW

Having more than one person with you during labour allows them to take breaks. And people with extra support often have shorter labours and need less pain medication.

Whether in the hospital or at home, you can choose who you'd like to have with you. You might include:

- your partner
- a close friend, parent or other family member
- a doula
- your other children

If children attend, tell your health care provider in advance and arrange for someone – other than the people supporting you – to look after them.

What is a doula?

A professional who gives emotional and physical support. Doulas don't offer medical care and aren't covered by the Medical Services Plan.



MONEY SENSE

The **Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program** covers up to \$1,000 of doula costs for Aboriginal mothers. Visit bcaafc.com for more information.

Your Birth Wishes

Write down your hopes for labour and birth and discuss them with your medical and personal support teams in advance. This will help you all work better together.

Keep your list short and clear. You might include:

- preferred birthing positions
- whether or not you want pain medication
- what you'd like to happen if you need medical help



BE AWARE

Labour is an emotional experience. And if you've gone through trauma in your life, being in labour may trigger especially negative memories and feelings. You can help build your sense of control and your ability to cope by making a clear birth plan and sharing it with your support team and health care providers.



TRY THIS

Tell your health care provider in advance about any special ceremonies or traditions you'd like to include to welcome your new baby.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Sometimes not all of your birth wishes can be met. But your support teams can ensure that you're involved in all decisions along the way.



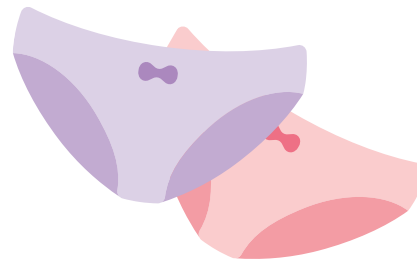
DID YOU KNOW

The B.C. Women's Hospital & Health Centre offers a simple template to record your birth wishes. Visit bcwomens.ca and search for "Labour and Birth Guide for Families and Care Providers."



FAMILY STORY

Our birth wishes were really useful. Our nurses changed at shift time, but they would read our birth wishes and come into the room knowing who I was and what we hoped for.



Packing for the Hospital

Check with the hospital to see what they provide and what you'll need to bring. Then pack everything in advance so you'll be prepared before you go into labour.

Helpful items might include:

- **labour supplies**, including lip balm, hot and cold packs, a hand-held massager, music, flip-flops for the shower, and snacks and drinks for you and your personal support team
- **personal items**, like pajamas (front-opening for breastfeeding), toothbrush, several pairs of underwear, large sanitary pads and loose clothes to wear home
- **items for the baby**, including a CMVSS-approved car seat (see [Baby Safety](#)), newborn diapers, sleepers and a blanket

Preparing for a Home Birth

Your midwife will offer tips for getting your home ready and will bring the equipment and medications you'll need. It's also a good idea to have a packed bag ready, just in case you need to go to the hospital.



PARTNERS

What You Can Do

Let your work know that you may have to leave on short notice, make sure there's gas in the car, and always be reachable within 2 weeks of the due date. And pack your own bag. Include a sleeping bag and, if you'll be helping in the shower, a swimsuit.