

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 without maternity services, you may have to travel to give birth in a community with available maternity service providers or hospital maternity services. Your health care provider can connect you with supports and resources.



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.

Your Health Care Circle of Support

During the birth

If you give birth in a hospital, a Registered Nurse with a specialization in perinatal nursing will be with you during your labour and delivery. Your health care provider – your doctor or midwife – will be with you during the birth. Depending on how their practice is set up they may be with you at regular intervals during your labour or with you continuously for your labour. Ask your health care provider what you can expect for care during labour. 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're being cared for by a doctor, they'll give you instructions about follow-up once you leave the hospital. You will also be contacted by a public health nurse.

If you're being cared for by 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're being cared for in a collaborative practice, you'll be cared for by the team.

Your Personal Circle of Support

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

- your partner(s)
- 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.

If you need medical advice after hours, contact your on-call maternity provider first, then call a HealthLink BC registered nurse at 8-1-1.

What is a doula?

A professional support person who provides emotional and physical care and information before, during and shortly after the birth. Doulas don't offer medical care and aren't covered by the Medical Services Plan. To find a doula, visit bcdoulas.org. Different communities may have different doula directories.



MONEY SENSE

The Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program covers up to \$1,200 of doula costs per pregnancy for Indigenous families. Visit bcaafc.com for more information.

Your Birth Preference Guide

Birth preference guides are a supportive communication tool to help support you with labour and birth options.

This is an opportunity to share with your care team what is important to you. This also gives you an ability to share any cultural, ceremonial and traditional practices you may want to include in your labour and birth. Use this guide early and often, and discuss with your care team and your partner(s) or support.

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 can be an emotional experience. And if you've gone through trauma in your life, being in labour may trigger negative memories and feelings. You can help create a supportive environment and build your sense of control and your ability to cope by sharing your birth preferences with your support teams.



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

Births are unpredictable, and sometimes not all of your birth wishes can be met. But your support circle can ensure that you're involved in all decisions along the way.



DID YOU KNOW?

Perinatal Services BC has created a birth preference guide. See the appendix or find it here: perinatalservicesbc.ca/Documents/Health-info/PSBC_Birth_Preference_Guide.pdf



FAMILY STORY

Our birth wishes were really useful. My partner shared our preferences with the staff, so even though our nurses changed at shift time, they came into the room knowing who I was and what we hoped for.



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.

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 skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding or chestfeeding), 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
- See the Labour and Birth Hospital packing list in the appendix or find it at: perinatalservicesbc.ca/Documents/Health-info/PSBC_Labour_and_birth_hospital_packing_list.pdf

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.