

Choosing Where to Have Your Baby

The NNUH Maternity Services provide a full range of pregnancy, labour and postnatal care to women and their families. There are approximately 6,000 babies born in a year in this part of Norfolk. We offer the following services; a homebirth service, a low risk midwifery led Birthing Unit co-located at the hospital (MLBU) and a higher risk consultant-led unit (Delivery Suite).

The choice you make will depend on your personal circumstances and preferences. It may be that you will be advised which service is more appropriate for you, however the place should feel right for you. Being tense or anxious may inhibit your labour and make it more difficult to cope, so being as relaxed as possible is important. There are times when it is felt by doctors or midwives that it would be safer to deliver on the consultant lead unit, and there are criteria for a "low risk" pregnancy that need to be met in order to deliver on MLBU. It is always possible to speak to a midwife or doctor if you would prefer an alternative place of birth to that suggested, and the risks and benefits will be discussed with you.

Having your baby at home - What to expect

When in labour

Midwives will care for you during labour at home.

Possible complications

If complications develop during your pregnancy or labour, you may be advised to change your plans and have your baby in hospital. The most common reasons for transfer are concerns about the baby or slow progress in labour. Occasionally, you may need to go into hospital after the birth of your baby.

What national research tells us about home birth (Birthplace, 2011)

- If you have had a baby before without serious complications, are healthy and have a straightforward pregnancy this time, you and your baby are just as safe choosing to have your baby at home compared to in hospital.
- When women who had already had a baby without serious complications chose to have their baby at home, only 12 out of every 100 women needed transfer to a Consultant Unit.
- For women who chose home birth for their first baby, 45 women out of every 100 women needed to be transferred to a Consultant Unit.
- For first births, the study showed 9 babies out of every 1000 born at home had a poor outcome compared to 5 babies out of every 1000 born in a Consultant Unit. These outcomes range from still birth to serious injury to the baby.

Advantages of a home birth

- You may feel more comfortable, relaxed and in control in your own home.
- You don't have to interrupt your labour to go into hospital.
- You will not need to leave your other children, if you have any.
- You will not have to be separated from your partner after the birth.
- You are more likely to be looked after by a midwife you have got to know during your

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pregnancy.

- You are less likely to have intervention such as forceps or ventouse than women giving birth in hospital.

Disadvantages of a home birth

- You may have to transfer to hospital by ambulance if there are any complications.
- If you are having your first baby at home rather than in hospital, there is a slightly increased risk of your baby having a poor outcome.
- On occasions, the option of home birth cannot be supported due to staffing levels.

Having your baby on the MLBU - What to expect

The MLBU aims to provide a 'home from home' environment for healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies who prefer to have their babies in hospital. When labour starts, you call the MLBU to let them know. A midwife will talk to you and help you decide when you should come in. On arrival you will receive support from a midwife who will help you to give birth. Most women go directly home from the MLBU, 5-6 hours after the birth. However, if you or your baby needs extra care, you will be transferred to the postnatal ward.

Your surroundings

The MLBU has four rooms, two of which have birthing pools. An additional birthing pool is also available. All rooms are sensitively decorated with soft lighting. Audio equipment is available and you are encouraged to bring your own music and pillows to help you relax. Birthing balls, floor mats and bean bags are available. You and your supporters are free to make drinks and bring in snacks.

What national research tells us about Birth units (Birthplace, 2011)

- If you are healthy and have a straightforward pregnancy and plan to have your baby in a birth unit you are likely to experience fewer interventions and are more likely to have a vaginal birth. In addition you and your baby are just as safe as you would be if you chose to have your baby in a consultant led unit.
- When women who had already had a baby without serious complications chose to have their baby in a birth unit, 13 out of every 100 needed to transfer to a Consultant unit.
- For women who chose to have their first baby in a birth unit, 40 out of every 100 needed transfer to a Consultant unit.

Advantages to the MLBU

'Home from home' environment.

- Greater opportunity for using water for labour and/or birth.
- Fewer interventions in straight forward, uncomplicated pregnancies.
- More likely to have a vaginal birth.
- If you need to be transferred to the Consultant Unit it is a short distance along a corridor.

Disadvantages of MLBU

- If you develop complications you will need to be transferred to Delivery Suite.

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- It is not possible to have an epidural on the MLBU.

Please see leaflet 'Welcome to the Midwifery Led Birthing Unit'.

Having your baby in the Delivery Suite - What to expect

If you have any health issues, complications in your pregnancy or factors which might make complications more likely, it is safest for you to have your baby on Delivery Suite. When labour starts, you call the Delivery Suite. A midwife will talk to you and help you to decide when you should come in. If your birth has been straightforward, you can go home directly from Delivery Suite 5-6 hours after your baby is born. If there have been any complications, or if you need help with feeding, you may be admitted to the postnatal ward.

Your surroundings

The Delivery Suite has 14 rooms, one of which has a birthing pool. Each room has ensuite facilities. Birth balls are available. You are encouraged to bring in your own music and pillows to help you relax. There is a pool room for women who wish to use water during their labour and birth.

What national research tells us about Consultant Units (Birthplace, 2011)

If you are healthy, do not have any pregnancy complications or anticipated problems and choose to have your baby on the Delivery Suite, you are more likely to experience interventions and less likely to have a vaginal birth.

Advantages of birth in consultant unit

- Epidural pain relief is only available on Delivery Suite.
- Emergency services are more readily available.
- There is the availability of additional monitoring for mothers and babies if indicated, including wireless, waterproof monitoring if deemed appropriate.

Disadvantages of birth in a consultant unit

- There are more interventions on delivery suite which may not be appropriate if you are low risk

After the birth of your baby

Your baby will need a full examination by a qualified neonatal examiner within 72 hours. If you have your baby at home, a specially trained midwife visits you to carry out this examination. In the event of no one being available you may be invited into the hospital for this check. You will be sent an appointment for your baby to have his/her routine hearing test carried out. If you have your baby in hospital, the medical examination and hearing test are usually carried out before you go home.

How to find out more - Talk through your feelings with your Community Midwife

<https://www.which.co.uk/birth-choice>

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/birthplace/Birthplace-key-findings.pdf>



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