



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

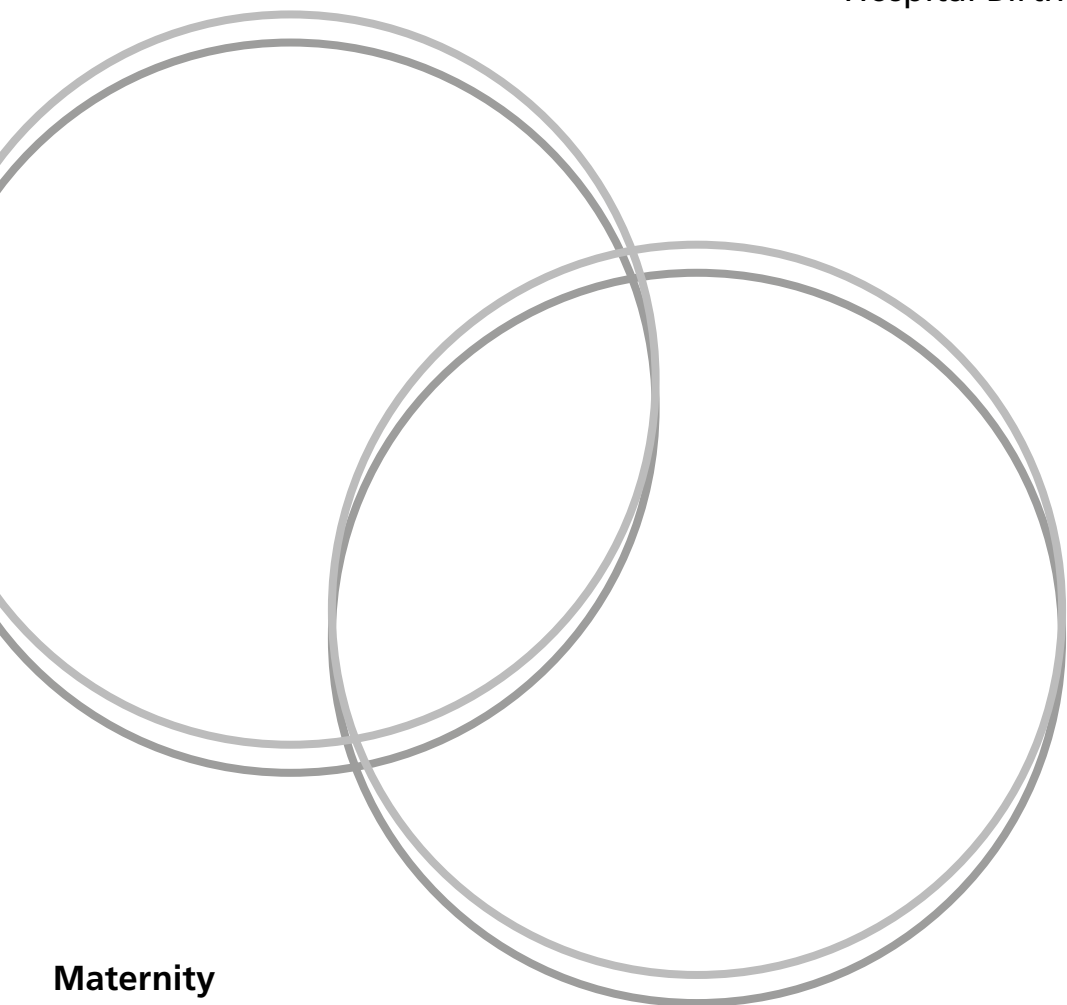
Birth Choices in Oxfordshire

Information for parents-to-be choosing:

Home Birth

Birth in a Midwife Led Unit

Hospital Birth



Maternity

Planning where to give birth

Planning for your labour and birth can often feel daunting, especially if you have never had a baby before. Our midwives and doctors will support you and your birthing partner to prepare for labour and the birth of your baby. Taking into account the wellbeing of you and your baby, they can talk through all of the options available, enabling you to choose where you would prefer to have your baby.

Most women can expect a normal pregnancy and birth. If you have a low chance of complications we will recommend that your care is led by your community midwife. If you have a pre-existing medical or obstetric condition (pregnancy related), or a complication develops during your pregnancy, our hospital-based obstetric teams will provide additional care and monitoring.

If you are expecting your first baby, and have a low chance of complications, you are advised to plan to give birth at home or in a midwife led unit also known as an MLU. An MLU is separate birthing unit either based in hospital or in your local community. Your community midwife will tell you where your nearest MLU is. The chance of interventions being needed to help birth the baby is lower than in an obstetric unit. The outcome for the baby is no different, compared with an obstetric unit.

If you are expecting your second, third or fourth baby, and have a low chance of complications, you are advised to plan to give birth at home or in an MLU (separate to or based in the hospital). The chance of interventions being needed (where we have to intervene to help birth the baby) is lower than in an obstetric unit. The outcome for the baby is also no different, compared with an obstetric unit.

Places to give birth in Oxfordshire

Home birth

Women who choose a home birth report higher satisfaction levels with their birth experience, feeling more relaxed and in control during their labour. You are less likely to need pain relief and other interventions.

It has been found that women having their baby at home experience fewer interventions than those having a hospital birth, with no increase in complications for their babies.

New evidence has shown that a planned home birth for women having their first baby results in fewer interventions. It is just as safe for babies to be born at home as it is in an MLU or hospital. Evidence shows that an increased rate of 30 to 40 in every 100 women having a home birth will need to transfer in hospital. This is most often for reasons that are not an emergency.

For mothers having their second or subsequent babies, the rate of transfer from home to hospital is much lower.

Your community midwife will discuss the things you will need for your home birth with you. A home visit is usually planned at around 36 weeks to discuss your plans for the birth and to answer any questions you might have.

If your labour begins before 37 weeks you will need to go into hospital to have your baby. This is because additional help and support may be required during labour and following birth for babies that are born early.

If you have an uncomplicated pregnancy and are expecting a normal birth, our community midwives can care for you and your baby during labour and birth in your own home. You will receive one-to-one care from a midwife during labour and a second midwife will join you before the birth of your baby.

It is possible you may be asked to give birth in a midwife led unit or the John Radcliffe Hospital if there are not two midwives available to attend your planned home birth.

If there are concerns about you or your baby's wellbeing during your home birth, your midwife will recommend that you are taken by ambulance to the John Radcliffe Hospital.

Following a birth at home, your midwife or GP will carry out a newborn check on your baby, usually within 72 hours. This may be at home or you may need to go to your GP surgery.

Midwife Led Unit (MLU)

If you are expecting a normal labour and birth, but do not want to have a home birth or an epidural for pain relief in labour, you can choose to have your baby at one of our MLUs.

The Spires MLU is on Level 7 of the Women's Centre at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

In the community, there are MLUs at Wallingford and Wantage Community Hospitals and the Cotswold Birth Centre at Chipping Norton. During the day these MLUs are staffed by community midwives and maternity support workers (MSWs). At night a community midwife will be on-call from home.

There is an MLU at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury, which is staffed by a midwife 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

MLUs offer the reassurance of having all the necessary support on hand during normal labour and birth, as well as a relaxed and homely environment. They also provide birthing balls, bean bags and mats to help you find comfortable positions in labour.

If you would like to use a birthing pool during childbirth, these are available.

MLUs are run by midwives. This means there are no doctors on the units. If there are concerns about you or your baby's well being, your midwife will recommend that you are taken by ambulance to the John Radcliffe Hospital.

The Spires MLU is in the John Radcliffe Hospital. This means that if you are in labour on The Spires and there are concerns about you or you baby's wellbeing, your midwife will arrange transfer down to Delivery Suite on Level 2 using the lift next to The Spires.

Women who choose an MLU birth are less likely to have intervention during labour and report a greater satisfaction with the care that they receive. It has been found that women who give birth in an MLU have fewer interventions than those who give birth on a consultant led delivery suite.

Hospital birth

The delivery suite at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford offers support during labour and birth if your care needs to be managed by the obstetric team. Medical and midwifery staff provide 24 hour care, supporting you to achieve a safe and satisfying birth experience. Birthing balls, bean bags and mats are available to help you find comfortable positions in labour.

If you would like to use a birthing pool during childbirth, these are available.

The delivery suite has dedicated operating theatres. The neonatal unit at the John Radcliffe Hospital provides specialist care for babies who need additional support in the early days following birth.

Transfer to hospital from home or a community MLU

Transfers from home or an MLU are more common for women having their first baby. 36 to 45 in every 100 women having their first baby at home or in an MLU will need to be transferred into hospital for medical help during childbirth.

9 to 13 in every 100 women having their second or subsequent babies at home or in an MLU will need to be transferred into hospital for medical help during childbirth.

If there are concerns about the wellbeing of you or your baby during labour or after birth, your midwife will recommend that you are transferred to hospital. This will be by ambulance whenever possible, with a paramedic on board.

If an ambulance isn't available and only if appropriate, your midwife will travel with you in an ambulance car. Once you get to hospital your community midwife will hand over your care to a hospital midwife. It is a good idea to have a hospital bag packed with the essentials, just in case you need to be transferred.

How quickly you are taken to hospital will depend on the ambulance response time. This may vary, as the ambulance service needs to respond to all calls and will prioritise the most critical emergencies.

Although rare, emergencies can occur during labour and birth. These may require immediate access to medical advice and advanced resuscitation facilities, to ensure the best possible outcome for you and your baby.

Midwives are trained to respond to these emergencies and will call an ambulance to support them and transfer to hospital as soon as possible.

If you would like more information your midwife will be happy to discuss any details with you.

Preparing for a home birth

Most women may prefer to have their birth partners with them throughout labour and birth. This means it is best to make childcare arrangements for any other children in your home, so that your birth partner can stay with you. If you think you are going into labour, it is important to contact us straightaway to let us know what is happening and to allow the midwife plenty of time to travel to your home.

The room where you decide to have your baby needs to be big enough for you to give birth in safely. Remember that you may have your birth partner, two midwives and their equipment in the room with you.

If you are planning to hire a birthing pool, take into account the size and the weight of the pool when it is filled with water. Your community midwife can discuss any questions you may have about the pool. Birthing pools can be hired privately or bought from a variety of sources. Some community midwifery teams can also supply birthing pools.

You need to make sure that the midwife can gain good all round access to your birthing environment, without having to bend over or stretch too much. This is important for their comfort and safety.

You need to be able to keep the room warm enough for the baby once it is born. Easy access to a bathroom and plenty of hot water for bathing before and after the birth also helps to make the experience more comfortable. In addition, you need to have good lighting available, in case you need stitches after the birth. A home phone or fully charged mobile phone with reception should also be available.

During labour, the membranes around the baby will break and the waters surrounding your baby will leak away. This may damage furniture, carpets, bedding, etc. It is a good idea to have plenty of clean linen and towels, as well as protection for the bed, pillows and floor. Non-plastic, non-slip waterproof sheets are useful; large waterproof dustsheets are available from most DIY stores.

When you are in established labour you may not feel like eating much, but having regular drinks is important to keep you hydrated and give you energy. Your birth partner and midwife may need to eat as well if your labour is lengthy.

You may wish to ask your GP for a prescription for pain relieving and anti-sickness medicines; you can discuss this in more detail with your midwife. These drugs must be stored safely out of reach of young children. If the drugs are not used you should return them to the dispensing chemist or destroy them in the presence of the midwife.

When you go into labour the midwife will bring Entonox (also known as gas and air) and basic portable resuscitation equipment. However, if you or your baby need advanced resuscitation you will be transferred as an emergency to hospital, where this can be provided.

Further information

This leaflet has been designed to give you some general information about the different options for where to give birth.

If you would like more information, please speak to your midwife, GP or obstetrician (hospital doctor).

Further information

Please speak to the department where you are being seen if you would like an interpreter. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter. Please also ask them if you would like this information leaflet in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronically
- in another language.

We have tried to make this information meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They will be happy to help.

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