

Which?

Birth Choice

Choosing where to give birth

OUR SUPPORTERS



The Royal College of
Midwives

It's time to start thinking about where to give birth

It's important to get booked in so that you can receive antenatal care, but don't feel that the decision you make now is final.

As you go through your pregnancy you can change your mind about where you'd like to give birth as your needs or priorities may change.

Why does choosing where to give birth matter?

Where you plan to give birth can affect many things, from how likely you are to have an unplanned caesarean to how comfortable and confident you feel.

Who looks after you - if you chose a birth centre or home birth, midwives will care for you and you'll be transferred to a labour ward if you need assistance from a doctor. If you're a first-time mum you're more likely to be transferred than if you've had a baby before.



How you give birth - the chances of having medical interventions, such as an unplanned caesarean or assisted delivery, differ depending on both your individual circumstances and where you plan to give birth. For example, if your pregnancy is straightforward, with no medical complications, planning to give birth in a labour ward increases the chance of having an unplanned caesarean section, compared with planning to give birth at home or in a birth centre.

Pain relief - if using water for pain relief is important to you, consider giving birth at home or in a birth centre, as the chances of using this natural form of pain relief are much higher than if you plan to give birth in a labour ward. Some types of medical pain relief, such as epidurals, are only available in labour wards.

How Which? Birth Choice can help you

- Our simple interactive tool helps you decide what would be best for you, based on your personal preferences and circumstances.
- We provide detailed information on your local units covering everything from the size of the unit to whether your birth partner can stay overnight.
- Personalised statistics show you how women, in similar circumstances to you, give birth in your local unit.

Home birth



Two midwives will come to your home to support you during labour. You can hire or buy a birth pool if you'd like to use one and your midwives can usually provide gas and air if you'd like to use it. If you need assistance from a doctor, or would like additional pain relief such as an epidural, you'll be transferred to a hospital in an ambulance.

Birth Centre



Birth centres are midwife-led units with a focus on natural forms of pain relief. Midwives will support you during labour, but if you need assistance from a doctor you'll be transferred to a labour ward. You'll be transferred by ambulance if you're at a birth centre which is separate from a hospital, known as a freestanding birth centre.

Labour ward



Also known as a delivery suite, an obstetric unit or a consultant-led maternity unit, this is a unit in a hospital where medical facilities and doctors are on hand. Most medical interventions, such as epidurals and caesarean sections, are only possible in a labour ward.

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Get thinking about where to give birth

Use the Which? Birth Choice tool to find the best place for you to give birth. Our tailored search considers your preferences and personal circumstances to suggest the local options most suited to you.

[which.co.uk/having-a-baby](https://www.which.co.uk/having-a-baby)