

Intrapartum care

Information for the public

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Intrapartum care: the care you should expect

Having a baby is an emotional, intense and life-changing event. Healthcare professionals should do everything they can to make the birth a positive experience for you and any birth companions you have. To help achieve this, it is important that you are given information that is understandable to you, and in appropriate ways, so you can make fully informed choices about you or your baby's care during labour and birth, and immediately after.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people giving birth and babies by making sure:

- you are fully informed about any care options or care decisions you need to make at every stage, and that your decisions are supported by your care team
- you are given information well in advance of labour about your choices for possible locations for birth, methods of birth, and any factors that might affect the range of options available to you
- if a complication happens during labour, you are told what this means for you and your baby, what your care options now are, and how the changing situation might affect any choices you have made in your birth plan.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best made when they are fully informed. Your care team should give you clear information, talk with you about your options, answer your questions, listen carefully to your views and concerns, and support your choices.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what are the things that could happen during and after birth that you feel will most affect the birth experience for you and your baby?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to any of the care options that worry you more than others?
- What are your preferences for how, where and when birth will take place?
- What happens if you do not want to have a particular care option, and will that affect other options or choices you have made?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your health or care professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about labour and birth, including [where to give birth: the options](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [AIMS \(Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services\)](#), 0300 365 0663
- [Birthrights](#), info@birthrights.org
- [NCT \(National Childbirth Trust\)](#), 0300 330 0700
- [Tommy's](#), 0800 014 7800

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with women who have given birth, and people involved in supporting women and babies during labour and birth. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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