



1 establishments, with just 0.85% at home (ONS, 2020.  
2 [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarri](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths)  
3 [ages/livebirths](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths). Accessed 12 May 2020)

4 Giving birth is a life-changing event, and the care that a woman receives  
5 during labour can affect her short-term and long-term physical and emotional  
6 health, and that of her baby. High quality, safe and responsive care, based on  
7 the latest evidence, with timely interventions, should minimise the risk of  
8 adverse events during birth. In addition to this, adequate support for the  
9 woman and good communication during labour can optimise outcomes and  
10 contribute to making birth a positive experience for the woman, and for her  
11 birth companions. Conversely, a birth in which serious and potentially  
12 avoidable complications arise, can lead to a devastating outcome for the  
13 baby, mother, and the wider family, with potentially life-long consequences.

14 There is also a financial consideration, as while a successful birth that leads to  
15 a healthy mother and baby has a beneficial long-term financial outcome for  
16 the NHS and social services, the downstream costs of care after an adverse  
17 birth event can be substantial.

## 18 **Current practice**

19 The existing intrapartum care guideline was published in 2007 and updated in  
20 2014, with additional amendments in 2017 relating to the measurement of  
21 fetal heart rate. In addition to the surveillance review described above,  
22 stakeholders and topic experts have identified that some areas of the current  
23 guideline may not reflect current terminology or current practice.

## 24 **Policy, legislation, regulation and commissioning**

25 Since 2014 several initiatives have impacted on national policy for maternity  
26 services. These include the report of the National Maternity Review '[Better](#)  
27 [Births](#)' which was published in 2016 and the subsequent [Maternity](#)  
28 [Transformation Programme](#) (MTP). The MTP aims to reduce the number of  
29 stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries, as well as creating

1 a more personalised, kinder, professional and family friendly maternity  
2 service.

3 In 2016, NHS England also launched the [Saving Babies' Lives](#) care bundle,  
4 which aimed specifically to reduce stillbirth rates by encouraging targeted  
5 evidence-based practice. The report focused on 4 themes: reducing smoking  
6 in pregnancy, monitoring fetal growth, raising awareness of reduced fetal  
7 movement and fetal monitoring during labour. This has subsequently been  
8 updated in 2019 with an additional theme on reducing preterm birth.

9 The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists also launched its own  
10 national quality improvement programme called [Each Baby Counts](#) in 2015,  
11 with the aim of reducing the rates of babies born at term who die or are left  
12 with severe brain injury.

13 In addition, there are the ongoing lesson learnt reports from the [Mothers and](#)  
14 [babies: reducing risk through audits and confidential enquiries](#) (MBRRACE-  
15 UK) group that aim to inform maternity and perinatal care. It will be important  
16 that the areas included in the update of the intrapartum care guideline take  
17 these lessons into consideration where appropriate.

## 18 **2 Who the guideline is for**

19 This guideline is for:

- 20 • pregnant women, their birth companions, families and the public
- 21 • obstetricians, midwives, anaesthetists and other healthcare professionals  
22 involved in the care of women in labour
- 23 • providers and commissioners of maternity services.

24 NICE guidelines cover health and care in England. Decisions on how they  
25 apply in other UK countries are made by ministers in the [Welsh Government](#),  
26 [Scottish Government](#) and [Northern Ireland Executive](#).

## 1 ***Equality considerations***

2 NICE has carried out [an equality impact assessment](#) during scoping. The  
3 assessment:

- 4 • lists equality issues identified, and how they have been addressed
- 5 • explains why any groups are excluded from the scope.

6 The guideline will look at inequalities relating to women who have  
7 complicating social factors who find it difficult to access and/or derive full  
8 benefit from the care available, such as recent migrants, travellers, women  
9 who have difficulty understanding and speaking English, and women with  
10 disabilities.

11 For simplicity of language, this guideline will use the term 'woman' or 'mother'  
12 throughout, and this should be taken to include people who do not identify as  
13 women but who are pregnant.

## 14 **3 What the updated guideline will cover**

### 15 **3.1 Who is the focus?**

#### 16 **Groups that will be covered**

- 17 • Women in labour who are pregnant with a single baby, who go into labour  
18 at term (37 to 42 weeks of pregnancy) and who do not have any pre-  
19 existing medical conditions or antenatal conditions that predispose to a  
20 higher risk birth.
- 21 • Women in labour whose baby has not been identified before or during  
22 labour to be at high risk of adverse outcomes.
- 23 • Singleton babies born at term (37 to 42 weeks of pregnancy) with no  
24 previously identified problems (for example congenital malformations,  
25 genetic anomalies, intrauterine growth restriction, placental problems).

26 Subgroups of older women, those from a BAME background or from a  
27 deprived socioeconomic group may need specific consideration, if data are  
28 available.

## 1 **Groups that will not be covered**

- 2 • Women in labour who are identified before or during labour to be at high
- 3 risk, or whose baby is at high risk, of complications or adverse outcomes.
- 4 • Women with breech presentation.
- 5 • Women in preterm labour.
- 6 • Women with an intrauterine fetal death.
- 7 • Women pregnant with multiple babies.
- 8 • Women who are having their labour induced.
- 9 • Women who have had a previous caesarean birth or who are having a
- 10 planned caesarean birth.

## 11 **3.2 Settings**

### 12 **Settings that will be covered**

13 All settings where women may give birth, including consultant-led obstetric  
14 units, midwifery units located alongside obstetric units, freestanding midwifery  
15 units and women's homes.

## 16 **3.3 Activities, services or aspects of care**

### 17 **Key areas that will be covered in this update**

18 We will look at evidence in the areas below when developing this update. We  
19 will consider making new recommendations or updating existing  
20 recommendations in these areas only.

21 Note that guideline recommendations for medicines will normally fall within  
22 licensed indications; exceptionally, and only if clearly supported by evidence,  
23 use outside a licensed indication may be recommended. The guideline will  
24 assume that prescribers will use a medicine's summary of product  
25 characteristics to inform decisions made with individual patients.

26 1 Initial assessment of women reporting pre-labour rupture of membranes  
27 (PRoM).

28 2 Pain relief in labour: non-regional analgesia.

29 3 First stage of labour.

1 4 Second stage of labour.

2 5 Third stage of labour.

### 3 **Proposed outline for the guideline**

4 The table below outlines all the areas that will be included in the guideline. It  
5 sets out what NICE plans to do for each area in this update.

6 Recommendations in areas that are being retained from the existing guideline  
7 may be edited to ensure that they meet current editorial standards, and reflect  
8 the current policy and practice context.

<b>Area in the guideline</b>	<b>What NICE plans to do</b>
Choosing planned place of birth (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Medical conditions and other factors that may affect planned place of birth (2007, updated 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Women's experience in all birth settings (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
One-to-one care in all birth settings (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Service organisation and clinical governance (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Communication (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Mobilisation (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Support (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Hygiene measures (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Definitions of the latent and established first stages of labour (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Education and early assessment (2014)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - timeframe between a mother reporting

	possible PRoM and face-to-face clinical review
Pain relief (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Initial assessment of woman (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Measuring fetal heart rate as part of initial assessment (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Ongoing assessment (and criteria for transfer to obstetric-led care) (2014)	No evidence review: update wording of existing recommendations as needed - what constitutes an urgent or emergency transfer
Presence of meconium (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
General principles for transfer of care (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline (may carry out edits for clarification)
Support in labour (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Controlling gastric acidity (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Attitudes to pain and pain relief in childbirth (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Pain-relieving strategies (2007)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - use of water papules
Non-pharmacological analgesia (TENS) (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Inhalational analgesia (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Intravenous and intramuscular opioids (2007)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed – intravenous PCA in labour versus intermittent injection
Information about regional analgesia (2007, amended 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline

Timing of regional analgesia (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Care and observations for women with regional analgesia (2007, 1 updated 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Establishing and maintaining regional analgesia (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Measuring fetal heart rate (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline but editorial changes to tables 10 and 11 to aid implementation in clinical practice
Overall care (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Baseline fetal heart rate (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Baseline variability (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Decelerations (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Accelerations (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Categorisation of traces (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Management (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Conservative measures (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Intrauterine resuscitation (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Fetal scalp stimulation (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Fetal blood sampling (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline

When a fetal blood sample cannot be obtained (2017)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Record keeping (2014, some 2007 amended 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
PRoM (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Duration of first stage(2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Observations during the established first stage (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Possible routine interventions in the first stage (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Delay in first stage (2007)	Review evidence: update recommendations on dosage and titration of oxytocin
Definition (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Observations during the second stage (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Duration of the second stage and definition of delay (2007 or 2007, amended 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Non-clinical interventions to reduce C-birth	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Oxytocin in the second stage (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
The woman's position and pushing in the second stage (2007)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - position with/without epidural, delayed pushing with regional analgesia
Intrapartum interventions to reduce perineal trauma (2007)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - interventions such as perineal massage
Water birth (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Delay in the second stage (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline

Instrumental birth and delayed second stage (2007)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations - prophylactic antibiotics in assisted vaginal birth
Expediting birth (2104)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Third stage (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Definition of the third stage (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Prolonged third stage (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Observations in the third stage (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Active and physiological management of the third stage (2014)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - risks of active management, route of administration of oxytocin; use of carbetocin or other uterotonics, delayed cord clamping and new question on placement of the baby during delayed cord clamping
Retained placenta (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Postpartum haemorrhage - risk factors (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Postpartum haemorrhage - management (2014)	Review evidence: update existing recommendations as needed - use of tranexamic acid
Initial assessment of the newborn baby and mother–baby bonding (2007)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Neonatal resuscitation (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Care of babies in the presence of meconium (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Babies born to women with pre-labour rupture of the membranes at term (2007 and 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline
Initial assessment (2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline

Perineal care (2007, some amended 2014)	No evidence review: retain recommendations from existing guideline. Editorial change of heading to 'Perineal damage assessment and repair'
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## 1 Areas that will not be covered by the guideline

- 2 1 Planning place of birth.
- 3 2 Impact of raised BMI on place of birth.
- 4 3 Place of birth for suspected fetal macrosomia.
- 5 4 Non-clinical interventions to reduce unnecessary caesarean birth.
- 6 5 The criteria that necessitate an urgent or emergency transfer to obstetric  
7 care (although edits to clarify existing wording may be made).
- 8 6 The monitoring (for example, auscultation) that should occur during  
9 transfer (although edits to clarify existing wording may be made).
- 10 7 Ultrasound scanning in early labour to confirm presentation (cephalic  
11 versus breech).
- 12 8 The availability of cardiotocography at birthing centres.
- 13 9 Automated interpretation of cardiotocography.
- 14 10 Monitoring during labour.
- 15 11 Interpretation of CTG (although edits to clarify existing wording and  
16 tables may be made).
- 17 12 The benefits and risks of epidurals.
- 18 13 The impact of opioids administered during labour on breastfeeding.
- 19 14 Labouring in water for pain relief during labour.
- 20 15 The use of fetal scalp stimulation or fetal blood sampling to assess fetal  
21 wellbeing during labour.

## 22 Related NICE guidance

### 23 Published

- 24 • [Twin and triplet pregnancy](#) (2019) NICE guideline (NG137)
- 25 • [Hypertension in pregnancy](#) (2019) NICE guideline (NG133)
- 26 • [Intrapartum care for women with existing medical conditions or obstetric  
27 complications and their babies](#) (2019) NICE guideline (NG121)
- 28 • [Preterm labour and birth](#) (2015) NICE guideline (NG25)

NICE guideline: Intrapartum care draft scope CONFIDENTIAL

- 1 • [Safe midwifery staffing for maternity settings](#) (2015) NICE guideline (NG4)
- 2 • [Diabetes in pregnancy](#) (2015) NICE guideline (NG3)
- 3 • [Antenatal and postnatal mental health](#) (2014) NICE guideline (CG192)
- 4 • [Neonatal infection \(early onset\): antibiotics for prevention and treatment](#)
- 5 (2012) NICE guideline (CG149)
- 6 • [Caesarean section](#) (2011) NICE guideline (CG132) (currently being
- 7 updated, publication expected March 2021)
- 8 • [Pregnancy and complex social factors](#) (2010) NICE guideline (CG110)
- 9 • [Weight management before, during and after pregnancy](#) (2010) NICE
- 10 public health guideline (PH27)
- 11 • [Inducing labour](#) (2008) NICE guideline (CG70) (currently being updated,
- 12 publication expected October 2021)
- 13 • [Antenatal care for uncomplicated pregnancies](#) (2008) NICE guideline
- 14 (CG62) (currently being updated, publication expected August 2021)
- 15 • [Postnatal care up to 8 weeks after birth](#) (2006) NICE guideline (CG37)
- 16 (currently being updated, publication expected April 2021)

### 17 **NICE guidance about the experience of people using NHS services**

18 NICE has produced the following guidance on the experience of people using  
19 the NHS. This guideline will not include additional recommendations on these  
20 topics unless there are specific issues related to intrapartum care:

- 21 • [Medicines optimisation](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG5
- 22 • [Patient experience in adult NHS services](#) (2012) NICE guideline CG138
- 23 • [Service user experience in adult mental health](#) (2011) NICE guideline
- 24 CG136
- 25 • [Medicines adherence](#) (2009) NICE guideline CG76

### 26 **3.4 Economic aspects**

27 We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations.  
28 We will develop an economic plan that states for each review question (or key  
29 area in the scope) whether economic considerations are relevant, and if so  
30 whether this is an area that should be prioritised for economic modelling and

1 analysis. We will review the economic evidence and carry out economic  
2 analyses, using an NHS perspective, as appropriate.

### 3 **3.5 Key issues and draft questions**

4 While writing the scope for this updated guideline, we have identified the  
5 following key issues and draft review questions related to them:

6 1 Initial assessment of women reporting pre-labour rupture of membranes  
7 (PRoM):

8 1.1 What is the optimum timeframe between a mother reporting possible  
9 PRoM and face-to-face clinical review?

10 2 Pain relief in labour: non-regional analgesia:

11 2.1 What is the effectiveness of opioids administered by intravenous  
12 patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) compared to intramuscular  
13 administration?

14 2.2 What is the effectiveness of water papules for pain relief during  
15 labour?

16 3 First stage of labour:

17 3.1 What is the effectiveness of altering the dose of intravenous oxytocin  
18 to prevent excessive frequency of uterine contractions?

19 3.2 What is the optimum dose at which oxytocin should be restarted if  
20 stopped due to an abnormality in the CTG?

21 4 Second stage of labour:

22 4.1 What is the most effective position for birth in women with an  
23 epidural in situ?

24 4.2 What is the most effective position for birth in women without an  
25 epidural?

26 4.3 What are the benefits and risks of the different pushing techniques  
27 (immediate, spontaneous, delayed, directed) in the second stage of  
28 labour in women with regional analgesia?

29 4.4 What is the effectiveness of perineal care (for example, massage,  
30 hands-on support and warm compresses) for reducing perineal trauma  
31 and tears in the second stage of labour?

1 4.5 What is the effectiveness of prophylactic antibiotics for preventing  
2 post-natal infections in assisted vaginal birth?

3 5 Third stage of labour:

4 5.1 What are the benefits and risks associated with active management  
5 compared to physiological management in the third stage of labour?

6 5.2 Is intravenous administration of oxytocin more effective than  
7 intramuscular administration in the active management of the third stage  
8 of labour?

9 5.3 What is the effectiveness of uterotonics (for example, oxytocin and  
10 carbetocin) for the prevention of postpartum haemorrhage?

11 5.4 What is the optimum method (including timing and position) to  
12 perform delayed cord clamping to maximise outcomes for the baby?

13 5.5 What is the effectiveness of pharmacological treatments for the  
14 management of postpartum haemorrhage?

15 The key issues and draft questions will be used to develop more detailed  
16 review questions, which guide the systematic review of the literature

### 17 **3.6 Main outcomes**

18 The main outcomes that may be considered when searching for and  
19 assessing the evidence are:

20 For the woman:

- 21 • maternal death
- 22 • measures of blood loss (including measures of postpartum iron deficiency)
- 23 • genital tract trauma
- 24 • women's experience of labour and birth
- 25 • mode of birth
- 26 • normal birth (that is, without induction, without the use of instruments, not  
27 by caesarean birth and without general, spinal or epidural anaesthetic  
28 before or during delivery)

- 1 • birth without interventions (that is, normal birth which does not need  
2 augmentation of labour, use of opioid drugs, artificial rupture of the  
3 membranes, or managed third stage).

4 For the baby:

- 5 • neonatal death (death before the age of 28 completed days after live birth)  
6 • breastfeeding  
7 • respiratory complications  
8 • neurological complications  
9 • feeding difficulties  
10 • Apgar scores  
11 • Infection.

## 12 **4 NICE quality standards and NICE Pathways**

### 13 **4.1 NICE quality standards**

14 **NICE quality standards that may need to be revised or updated when**  
15 **this guideline is published**

- 16 • Intrapartum care (2015, updated 2017) NICE quality standard [QS105]

### 17 **4.2 NICE Pathways**

18 When this guideline is published, we will update the existing NICE Pathway on  
19 [Intrapartum care](#). NICE Pathways bring together everything NICE has said on  
20 a topic in an interactive flowchart.

## 21 **5 Further information**

This is the draft scope for consultation with registered stakeholders. The consultation dates are 7 January 2021 to 4 February 2021.

The guideline is expected to be published in March 2023.

You can follow progress of the [guideline](#).

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