

Introduction

The majority of women who plan to give birth in the community succeed in doing so. Complications are uncommon. However, they do sometimes occur and this leaflet has been produced to provide information for you to be able to choose where you would like to birth your baby. To have your baby in the community you need to be at least 37 weeks pregnant.

See

http://videos.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/torbay_maternity

Home Birth

Any woman can choose to birth their baby at home, including women having their first baby. Every woman will be individually risk assessed by her midwife as there are special circumstances when a home birth may be unwise and your midwife would discuss this with you.

Whitelake Midwifery-led Unit

The Whitelake birthing rooms are located at Newton Abbot Community Hospital but are available for any woman in the South Devon area to use who do not have any medical or pregnancy complications. The unit has two rooms, one of which has a birthing pool.

Why have a Community Birth?

Women have their own personal reasons for choosing to have their baby at home or in the birthing unit.

- ✓ It feels right for them
- ✓ To focus on birth as a natural life event
- ✓ The need to feel safe, secure and in control
- ✓ Less disruption to family life
- ✓ More privacy
- ✓ Calm and peaceful environment
- ✓ Your partner can stay with you throughout.

Who will be there?

A midwife will attend a woman choosing to have a community birth (If she feels during your birth that the Obstetric Unit at Torbay would be a safer option for you and your baby then she will discuss this with you). Midwives are experts in normal pregnancy, birth and care of you and your baby following birth. They specialise in normal, natural childbirth in a relaxed and restful environment.

Is it safe?

In 2017/18 1.7% of Torbay women had their baby at Whitelake. 3% had their baby at home. 61% of first time mothers and 81% of second or subsequent mothers admitted to the birthing rooms had their babies there in this time period. In 2011 a national study showed that 64% of first time mothers and 87% of second time mothers achieved their births at a birthing unit.

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace/results>

In the 2011 national study 55% of first time mothers and 82% of second and subsequent mothers had a home birth. The study also found that women planning to give birth in the community had a significantly reduced chance of needing a caesarean section or instrumental delivery (for example ventouse or forceps) and increased their chance of achieving a normal birth.

What happens if there are complications?

Midwives are trained to recognise when complications arise, and would arrange for your transfer to the maternity unit by ambulance. The midwife will accompany you and carry on your care at the hospital. Your 2 birthing partners can come with you but only one can come in the ambulance. In an emergency situation it will take longer to get full obstetric care for you and your baby. Examples of reasons for your transfer include: abnormal bleeding, concerns about your blood pressure, meconium in your waters or concerns about the baby's heart rate. After the birth if the midwife has any concerns for you or your baby she will arrange for your transfer to hospital. If you transfer for non-emergency reasons then it might take longer for the ambulance to arrive as this would not necessitate a 999 ambulance.

What if I need stitches?

Your midwife will try to assist you to birth your baby as easily as possible to prevent your perineum tearing. You may wish to practice perineal massage during your pregnancy. Performing pelvic floor exercises also helps to protect your perineum. Should you require stitches most midwives are able to suture simple tears. If the tear is more complex then you will need to transfer to hospital for stitching. You would be discharged home shortly afterwards using your own car.

How can I promote my comfort?

Women who labour and birth at home or in midwifery led birthing centre report needing fewer drugs for pain relief (Hatem et al 2008; RCOG/RCM 2007). Women tend to be more relaxed, feel in control and are able to cope with the sensations of their contractions. In a calm and peaceful environment you are less likely to produce the stress hormone, adrenalin that causes tension in your muscles. You will instead produce the natural 'feel good' hormone, oxytocin. You may wish to consider using massage, relaxation, breathing through your contractions, yoga, being active and using upright positions for labour, walking, TENS and water. You can have a home water birth but you will need to provide your own pool—a bath is not big enough! You will also have access to Entonox (gas and air). Your midwife can also obtain an opiate injection of diamorphine from Torbay hospital if you find that you need it. Epidurals are not available at home or in the birthing rooms.

Length of stay

At home, your midwife will stay with you whilst you recover from the birth—this is usually at least a couple of hours. In the birthing rooms you can go home when you feel rested and able to go home, most mums feel that 2—3 hours seems about right. Should you or your baby not be ready to be discharged home after a few hours then arrangements will be made to transfer you to Torbay Hospital.

How do I arrange a community birth?

Speak to your midwife who will be able to discuss your options with you in more detail and answer your questions. She will also discuss the practicalities with you. If your pregnancy has been normal, without complications, you will be offered a home assessment to check how your labour is progressing. Providing that all is well you will be able to choose to stay at home or go to the birthing rooms.

THERE ARE NO MIDWIVES BASED AT THE BIRTHING ROOMS SO YOU MUST CONTACT DELIVERY SUITE ON 01803 654641

If you would like to view the Whitelake Midwifery-Led Unit please telephone 01626 324651 to arrange this.



References

NCT (2001) Home Birth in the United Kingdom.
NPEU (2012)
<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace/results>
RCOG/RCM (2007) Joint Statement: Home Births
Hatem, R. (2008) Midwife led versus other models of care for childbearing women. The Cochrane Library.

Other sources of information:

www.nct.org.uk
www.homebirth.org.uk
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/dh_074920 (The Pregnancy Book)

NHS Where to give birth: the options
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/where-can-i-give-birth/#home-birth>

Some Comments from Mothers:

'Having my baby at home I felt so relaxed, without fuss or intervention. It was great to get in my own shower and use my own toilet afterwards then get into my own bed. My husband was able to make me tea and food as I wanted.'

'Newton Abbot was so clean and welcoming. I almost dived into the pool and there I stayed until I birthed my baby—she floated into the world and I picked her up out of the water. Afterwards my partner and I were given lots of time together to start bonding with our baby.'
I had my baby at Torbay but had some problems with breastfeeding afterwards—the maternity care assistants at Newton Abbot were brilliant and I can't recommend them enough for the help they gave me. Anyone can go.'

Fathers:

'It was lovely to stay with my partner and new baby and all go home together, rather than being sent home on my own in the middle of the night.'

'We were booked to have our baby in Plymouth but didn't like that it was a big unit. Newton Abbot was very quiet and intimate. The midwives included me in everything that was happening and I felt really relaxed and very excited about meeting our new baby.'

'I didn't have to worry about finding a parking space or getting a parking ticket!'

Royal College of Midwives Chief Executive Cathy Warwick

'The evidence shows that for low risk women giving birth in a midwife-led unit or at home is safe, indeed, may be safer than hospital. Women also tend to have higher satisfaction rates and a better birth experience when giving birth in these environments.'

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Community Birth: At home or the Whitelake Midwifery Led Unit



Working with you, for you