

Choosing a Place of Birth

From: www.childbirthconnection.org

How can I become familiar with my options for choosing a place of birth before making my decision?

We encourage you to visit and learn about several possible places of birth before making this important decision. If you know you want to choose a specific type of birth setting, it is a good idea to consider more than one hospital, freestanding birth center (if available), or home birth caregiver before making this important decision. Before deciding on a place of birth, it is also important that you feel comfortable with a caregiver who works in that setting.

What should I ask myself about the experience of exploring options for my place of birth?

When you go to visit a hospital or birth center, or talk with a midwife or other caregiver about giving birth at home, ask yourself how you feel about the experience:

- Are the people listening to me and respectful of my wish to make careful decisions?
- Are they willing to take the time to answer my questions to my satisfaction?
- Do they share my vision for my maternity care and birth?
- Do I think that I can feel comfortable in this setting and with these people?
- Can I get what I want from this setting and these people?
- Does this feel right for me?

Your place of birth will be the setting for one of the most intimate and important events of your life. Follow your instincts. Only you can make the decision that is right for you. If you have concerns, even if you are well into your pregnancy and prenatal care, it may be important to explore other options.

How can I learn about the place of birth that I am considering?

Take a tour. Many hospitals offers tours for parents who are thinking about giving birth there. Birth centers often have tours and open houses when you can meet the caregivers, learn about the facility, and ask questions. If you are interested in home birth, you can set up interviews with caregivers who may attend your birth at home.

How can I make the best use of my visits to various places of birth?

You may want to ask your partner or a friend to come with you to investigate places of birth. This will allow you to discuss your thoughts and impressions after the visit with someone you know and trust.

Having a list of questions with you (see below for questions you may wish to print out) can help:

- organize your thoughts and concerns
- ensure that you get all of your questions answered
- compare answers from different settings.

How do I know that practices in a place of birth are in line with the best research about safe and effective care for mothers and babies?

Maternity care can vary greatly from one place of birth to another. This website can help you understand why it is important to choose a birth setting where you can expect to receive the highest standard of care, and can help you recognize such care.

What questions should I ask when visiting and evaluating a hospital?

This website provides a list of important questions you may want to ask to learn about the policies and type of care provided in a specific hospital. Think about what is important to you, and be sure to add any other questions or concerns that you might have. A pdf version of this list (PDF) is available with space for making notes, and take it with you when you visit a hospital.

What questions should I ask when visiting and evaluating a birth center?

This website provides a list of important questions you may want to ask to learn about the policies and type of care provided in a specific birth center. Think about what is important to you, and be sure to add any other questions or concerns that you might have. A pdf version of this list (PDF) is available with space for making notes, and take it with you when you visit a birth center.

What questions should I ask a possible caregiver when considering a home birth?

If you want to give birth at home, there is, of course, no need to arrange for a tour of the facility, or ask questions about institutional rules and policies. It is extremely important, however, that you find a caregiver who is experienced in home birth (usually, but not always, a midwife) and who meets your needs. You will also want to arrange for a meeting with the back-up physician and a visit to the hospital that will be part of your care if a transfer is necessary.

How do I find out which places of birth are covered by my insurance plan?

Contact your insurance plan to find out

- whether the plan covers care in the place of birth where you wish to give birth
- whether the plan covers maternity care provided by the caregiver who will work with you in that place of birth
- whether there are any maternity services that are not covered
- whether they will cover a different setting or caregiver if you become dissatisfied with your original choices.

You will also want to check with your chosen place of birth and provider to be sure that they accept your insurance.

Another interesting blog:

<http://dynamicdoula.blogspot.com/2012/02/choosing-birth-facility-in-five-easy.html>