ACT Health Homebirth Trial

Having a homebirth

Who should consider having a homebirth?
Homebirth is not for everyone. If you meet the eligibility criteria and think that you will feel comfortable labouring and giving birth at home then you could consider a homebirth.

Are there any advantages of having a homebirth?
Women have reported that they feel more comfortable labouring and giving birth in their own environment. They also say that they feel more in control of the situation.

Does the level of care provided for homebirths differ to what’s provided at the hospital?
The care provided to women in their homes will be the same as the care provided by midwives in the Birth Centre.

When should I apply?
1. View the self assessment criteria.
2. Read the FAQs to learn more about the trial and homebirth in general.
3. Express your interest - see 'Expression of interest' section via the button at the top of this page.
4. A midwife will then contact you to discuss the trial and advise whether it is right for you.

OR

Contact the Birth Centre at the Canberra Centenary Hospital for Women and Children on (02) 6774 7341 between 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

What is the process once I’ve booked for a homebirth?
Confirmation of a place in the homebirth trial will not be finalised until a midwife has met with the woman and assessed her suitability for a place in the trial. Suitability for the trial is based on factors such as the eligibility criteria, geographical location, and her position on the booking list. Only two women each month will be accepted into the trial.

Who will staff the homebirths?
Two Canberra Midwifery Program (CMP) midwives will attend each homebirth including one primary midwife and one support midwife.

Current practice for CMP midwives conducting a hospital birth is for the primary midwife to call another midwife when a birth is imminent. This process will be the same for home births. This additional midwife is known as the support midwife.

Will water births be available under the trial?
Water births will not be offered during the trial. However, women will be able to labour in water if they wish, such as a bath.
When will I meet my primary and support midwives?

The primary midwife will undertake a full assessment following your expression of interest. Your primary midwife will arrange for you to meet other health professionals who will provide care for your planned homebirth, including the support midwife.

You will continue to receive comprehensive midwifery services throughout the continuum of your pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period, from your primary and support midwives.

What is the role of my midwife when I am in labour?

Your midwife will closely monitor you and your baby by listening to your baby’s heartbeat and regularly checking your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and progress of labour. Your midwife will offer professional and emotional support to guide you through your labour and openly discuss any changes needed to your birth plan in order to maintain your safety and that of your baby.

What equipment will be required for the birth?

When you have reached 36 weeks gestation, your midwife will provide you with a homebirth kit which will contain the routinely used equipment for your birth. You will be able to collect the kit from the Birth Centre. You will also be asked to collect an oxygen cylinder from British Oxygen Company (BOC), located in Fyshwick, and a medication pack from the Hospital Pharmacy, to store in your refrigerator.

What facilities will be needed at home to enable homebirth?

An overview of requirements needed for a birthing space at home is identified in the general self assessment criteria, but your primary midwife will also assess your home for suitability.

What pain relief can I have during a homebirth?

Most women choose to use water therapy, or water immersion in a bath or other natural remedies including massage, heat packs, and movement and positioning. You may also choose to take paracetamol (panadol) or ibuprofen (nurofen) to ease the discomfort. Pharmacological pain relief such as epidurals and nitrous oxide gas will not be available for homebirths.

What happens if I need to be transferred to hospital during my homebirth? And what is the transfer process?

Your midwife will advise you if there is a need for transfer to hospital. The reason for transfer could relate to you or your baby. This may be in your car or the midwife may decide to call the ACT Ambulance Service.

If I am transferred to hospital, will I keep my midwife?

Yes, you will have the same primary midwife throughout the duration of your birth, whether that is a homebirth or you are transferred to hospital.
What happens if I change my mind about homebirth? Can I go to hospital at any point during my labour?

If, during labour, you decide that you would prefer a hospital birth rather than a homebirth, you can raise your concerns at any point with your midwife and they will discuss the transfer option with you. Your primary midwife will continue to care for you in the hospital.

Can my family be with me during my homebirth?

Yes, you will discuss with your midwife who you would like to support you during labour, birth and after your baby is born.

What happens after the birth?

Your midwife will stay with you until you and your baby are safe, comfortable and breast feeding well. Your primary midwife will continue to be available by phone and will visit regularly at home.

Will my baby be checked by a doctor?

No, the midwife will undertake the first assessment of your baby following the birth. However, if you wish to have your baby checked by a doctor, you can visit your general practitioner at a later date. A Maternal and Child Health nurse will also visit you at home in the first month after you’ve given birth.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.

If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

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