ACT Health Homebirth Trial

Safety and risk

Homebirth is a good option for women who are well supported by qualified health care professionals and who are at low risk of childbirth complications. The homebirth program is well integrated with mainstream maternity services and this adds to the safety of the program. You will receive continuity of care by midwives who will monitor your health throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth, identifying (as much as possible) if risk factors arise that makes home no longer the best place for your birth.

How will complications be dealt with during the birthing process?

It is important to note that complications can arise in any pregnancy. Ongoing assessments throughout your pregnancy and birth will occur, to monitor you and your baby. The midwife may determine that you need to be transferred to the hospital if complications are identified.

The ACT homebirth trial has detailed procedures about the transfer process should you, or your baby, need to be transferred to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. In the event of an emergency, the ACT Ambulance Service will attend as quickly as possible to assist your midwife with this transfer.

As this is an ACT first, do we have the expertise required to undertake homebirth safely and efficiently in the ACT?

Two midwives will be present at every homebirth. All homebirth midwives are highly experienced and they work in close collaboration with a team of midwives, obstetricians and neonatologists at the hospital.

All ACT Health midwives observe the current codes, guidelines, and professional standards published by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and ACT Health policy.

How will infection control be managed throughout the trial?

Your midwife will ensure that infection control principles are adhered to in your home. They will ensure that equipment and processes align with ACT Health policies. Arrangements will be made for all essential equipment to be at your home approximately four weeks before your baby is due. All clinical waste from the birth will be removed from your home by the midwives present at the birth.

Is there ACT Health insurance for the trial?

Yes, your ACT Health midwife will have indemnity insurance cover as part of their employment contract.
What evidence is there that homebirth is safe?

Current published evidence demonstrates that planned homebirth, with a qualified midwife, is a safe alternative for women deemed to be at low risk of childbirth complications.

Evidence also tells us that women at low risk of birthing complications have the same outcomes, whether they have their baby in a hospital or in their home with a qualified midwife.

Continuous assessment and monitoring during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period will assist in managing and reducing any risks that may arise.

What are the risks associated with having a homebirth?

It is important to note that there are risks associated with every birth, including homebirth.

There are extreme circumstances where labouring and birthing at home increase the risk of poor outcomes to mother and baby. While they occur infrequently, the most common emergencies are excessive bleeding from the mother or failure of the baby to breathe after it is born. Our midwives are experienced in managing both of these situations.

In the event of an emergency, your homebirth midwife will make urgent contact with the ACT Ambulance Service to transfer you and your baby to the hospital.

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.

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