

# Publicly funded homebirth

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about publicly funded homebirth. Informed consent and woman centred care are integral to health care in Queensland. Decisions about your care are always up to you.

**IMPORTANT:** This is general information only. Ask your doctor, midwife or nurse about your own situation.

## What is publicly funded homebirth?

Publicly funded homebirth (PFHB) is maternity care that supports you to birth your baby at home. Your care is provided by a small group of midwives from your local public hospital. Other healthcare providers also provide care if you or your baby need it.

## Is homebirth right for you?

Choosing to birth your baby at home is a personal choice. Women have said a publicly funded homebirth supported them to have:

- comfortable and familiar surroundings
- privacy and control over who comes into their birthing space
- whoever they want at their birth (children, friends or extended family)
- a midwife they know (continuity of carer)
- greater choice, control and autonomy
- a different experience from their other birth/s
- a safety net in case problems arise

Talk with your midwife about what is important to you. They can give you more information about publicly funded homebirth.

## What does it cost to have a homebirth?

A publicly funded homebirth is free if you have a Medicare card. Your midwife will talk with you about the things provided by the hospital. There are some things you might like to buy or hire yourself. Your midwife can give you a list of things you might want to think about getting ready. Your midwife will bring everything they need.

## Is homebirth safe?

Yes, a publicly funded homebirth is safe for women who are healthy and at low-risk of complications. For women who are low-risk, the outcomes are better or no different when birth at home is compared to birth in hospital.

Low-risk birth at home (compared to low-risk birth in hospital)	
↑	Spontaneous vaginal birth
↑	No perineal tears
↓	Caesarean section
↓	3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> degree perineal tear
↔	Baby's wellbeing score at 5 minutes
↔	Stillbirth or neonatal death
↔	Babies needing intensive care
↑ more of   ↓ less of   ↔ No difference	

## What does 'low-risk' mean?

You and your baby are healthy throughout your pregnancy. You don't have health issues that might affect you or your baby's safety.

Your health and the health of your baby is checked at each visit. This helps detect any problems early.

Publicly funded homebirth is generally a safe choice if you:

- live within the local catchment area
- have no health issues that increase you or your baby's chance of complications
- are pregnant with only one baby
- have given birth to less than five babies
- are between 18–40 years old
- are between 37 weeks and 41 weeks and 6 days pregnant when your labour starts
- start labour with your baby in a head down position
- have a safe home environment to birth in



## What do you need at home?

Before 37 weeks, your midwife will visit your home at least once. They will talk with you about what helps make a safe place for a publicly funded homebirth. This includes:

- clear access into your home in case an ambulance is needed
- clean running water, electricity, lighting, heating/cooling, working smoke alarms/safety switch
- reliable phone reception
- a smoke/vapour free environment
- a home free of illicit drug use, illegal activity, and domestic and family violence
- plans for care of other children and pets
- a clear space and access for a birth pool (if using one)

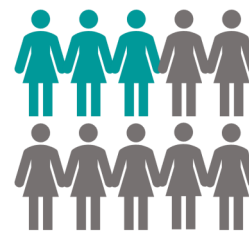
## What about pain relief at home?

Each woman's experience of labour and birth is different. Your midwife will talk with you about pain relief options available to you at home. Some types of pain relief are only offered in hospital. Plan and practise with your support people during pregnancy to build confidence.

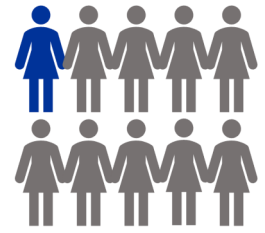
## What about transfer to hospital?

Sometimes your plans may need to change. Your midwife or doctor might recommend hospital as the safest place for you or your baby. This might happen before or after your baby is born. Talking about transfer and having a back-up plan 'just in case' can help you prepare.

Women who are having their first baby are more likely to transfer from home to hospital.



around 3 in 10 women  
in their first pregnancy  
are transferred



around 1 in 10 women  
who have given birth before  
are transferred

## Want more information?

Contact your local maternity service to find out what maternity care options are available to you. Not all hospitals offer publicly funded homebirth. Privately practicing midwives also offer planned birth at home. There is a fee for this type of planned homebirth.

Type of pain management	Homebirth	Hospital
<b>Relaxation techniques:</b> breathing, meditation, hypnosis, visualisation, massage, touch, movement, position changes, heat packs, affirmations	✓	✓
<b>Calm environment:</b> support people, music, emotional support, soft lighting	✓	✓
<b>Water therapy:</b> shower, birth pool	✓	✓
<b>Complimentary therapies:</b> aromatherapy, reflexology, acupressure	✓	✓
<b>TENS machine:</b> transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (hired or purchased)	✓	✓
<b>Sterile water injections:</b> injections under the skin for back pain	✓	✓
<b>Entonox gas:</b> a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen	May be available	✓
<b>Narcotic:</b> e.g. injection of morphine	✗	✓
<b>Epidural:</b> injection of local anaesthetic into your back	✗	✓

*Image: types of pain relief available for homebirth and birth in hospital*

## Support & information

**13HEALTH** (13 432584) telephone service providing health information, referral and services to the public.

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health>

**Parentline Queensland (1300 30 1300)** Free professional counselling and support for expecting and all parents.

<https://parentline.com.au>

**Pregnancy, Birth & Baby** (1800 882 436 - free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care.

<https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au>

**Queensland Clinical Guidelines** Parent information <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/qcg>

**Women's Health Queensland** health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals. <https://womenshealth.org.au>

**Australasian Birth Trauma Association** (0412 445 770) Information, educational material and 'peer2peer' support for people experiencing birth trauma <https://www.birthtrauma.org.au>