

Choosing where to give birth to your baby

Information and advice for women

Maternity

We are pleased you have chosen our services to assist you through your pregnancy, birth and into parenthood. You will have lots of information to think about over the next few months in how you manage your pregnancy – we are here to help you.

One of the things we know is very important to expectant parents is the place where you will give birth to your baby. At our Trust we have the following choices for you to consider and this leaflet will make those clear to you.

Where can I give birth?

If your pregnancy and labour are low risk, at this Trust you can birth in:

- The Serenity Birth Centre at the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH)
- The Labour Ward at the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH)

If you experience any complications during your pregnancy or labour, you can give birth in:

- The Labour Ward at the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH)

When you first meet your midwife she will assess your medical and social history; this will help you in making choices about your place of birth.

What is a low risk pregnancy and labour?

If you do not have any long-term or serious medical problems, or infections and have not had any problems during this current or previous pregnancy or previous birth, this is a low risk pregnancy.

Your midwife will assess this at the start of your pregnancy. If your pregnancy is low risk you do not need to see a consultant (specialist pregnancy doctor) during your pregnancy and will be cared for by midwives. Your midwife will do another assessment at 36 weeks of your pregnancy. If you have not had any problems during pregnancy you will still be low risk.

When you go into labour your midwife will do another assessment. Low risk labours are when:

- You have not had any problems in pregnancy.
- You are 37 – 41 weeks in your pregnancy.
- Your BMI is less than 35 at the start of your pregnancy.
- You are 16 – 40 years old.

- You are not anaemic (the level of iron in your blood isn't low).
- Your baby has developed normally and is lying head down.
- Your waters break and they are clear in colour.
- You have contractions that are regular and strong when labour starts.

What is a high risk pregnancy and labour?

High risk pregnancies and labours are when there is a problem during your pregnancy or labour that needs treatment. If your midwife thinks you may be high risk she will discuss this with you and may ask you to see a consultant for their opinion. The consultant may then decide that you are low risk and can continue to have your care led by your midwife, or may decide that you are high risk and need specialist care from a consultant.

Giving birth in a birth centre

Birth centres are units which offer midwifery led care. Birth centres are a suitable place for women who have had a 'low risk' pregnancy and are 'low risk' to give birth.'

Our Serenity Birth Centre is staffed by experienced midwives and midwifery care assistants, who are the best people to care for you when you have a 'low risk' pregnancy and birth. There are no doctors in the birth centre.

Serenity Birth Centre

The Serenity Birth Centre is a 'Co-located Birth Centre'. This means that it is run by midwives and there are no doctors on the unit, but it is in the same building as the Labour Ward at Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH) where there are doctors and facilities for high-risk births. If there is a problem with you or baby during labour you will be assessed and transferred to the Labour Ward nearby.

The facilities at Serenity Birth Centre

Serenity Birth Centre has 6 birthing rooms which are all decorated to have a modern, homely and relaxing feel. Each room is spacious and has:

- A birth pool
- A pull-down double bed
- A crib for your baby
- A changing station for your baby
- Mood lighting that you can control
- An ensuite bathroom

The Birth Centre also has:

- Birthing stools, slings, birth balls and birthing mats
- A waiting/communal area and toilet for visitors

What pain relief is available in the birth centres?

Your midwife will be with you at all times during your labour in the birth centre, supporting and helping you. They can also offer you the following methods of pain relief:

- Gas and air (entonox)
- Birth pools
- Pethidine injections
- Equipment such as birthing stools, mats and balls to help you find comfortable positions

Should you wish, you can also use your own TENS unit during early labour.

We are not able to provide epidural pain relief in the birth centres. If you plan to have an epidural you will be booked to have your baby on the Labour Ward at the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH). If you find you would like an epidural whilst you are in labour in our birth centre, you will be transferred to the Labour ward.

For more information about the methods of pain relief available to you please see our leaflet '**Labour: What happens and how it can be managed**'.

After you have given birth

After your baby has been born you will stay in the birth centre for a short time. Most women are home within a few hours of giving birth if it is their first baby, and quicker if they have given birth before. Your midwife will check that you and your baby are well and will make sure that you are happy with how your baby is feeding and responding to you. Once you and your midwife are happy, you will be discharged home with your new baby and your care will be provided by the Community Midwifery team.

If you need to stay in hospital longer, you and your baby will be admitted to the postnatal ward.

What are the benefits of giving birth in a birth centre?

- You may need less strong pain relief in labour because of the environment you are in, the facilities available to help you and the support of your midwife.
- You are less likely to need help to deliver your baby, such as a cut to the area between your vagina and anus, or help with forceps because you will be encouraged to walk and move around during your labour. Being upright and moving around can help you feel more comfortable and makes the most of gravity to help things along.
- Your birth partner(s) can stay with you throughout the birth and one partner can stay with you after the birth until you are ready to go home.

What are the risks of giving birth in a Birth Centre?

Some women giving birth in a Birth Centre need to be transferred to the Labour Ward because of a problem with their labour or their baby, or because they need additional pain relief. This happens to 3 – 4 out of 10 women having their first baby, and less than 2 out of 10 women who have given birth before.

If you are worried about how you will cope with the pain, or worried that there will be a complication, please talk to your midwife. You might also like to have a look at the booklet '**Labour: What happens and how it can be managed**' for information on pain relief. You may also like to come and visit one of the Birth Centres.

Labour Ward

Most women are familiar with labour wards; they are areas providing a package of care by a team of trained maternity staff. Midwives, obstetricians (doctors) anaesthetists and theatre staff work together to provide care for women who need a team approach. This is sometimes called combined care or Consultant-Led care. This type of care benefits women who have problems either with their own health or the current pregnancy. There are many reasons why Labour Ward would be suggested as the best place for you to give birth; you will be able to discuss those reasons individually with your consultant and midwife.

At the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH), there are 12 labour rooms with similar facilities in each. These generally consist of monitoring equipment for you and your baby during labour, lots of room to move around if you are able to and a midwife who will be with you throughout your labour.

The rooms are spacious with en-suite facilities, your midwife will orientate you to the room and the facilities on your arrival.

You will be more likely to birth on the Labour Ward if you have:

- Diabetes, high blood pressure or other conditions that affect pregnancy
- Your baby has not grown as expected during the pregnancy
- You have had a previous birth that was complicated.
- Your pregnancy is over your due date by 7 days.

There are a number of considerations when choosing to give birth on Labour Ward. There is an increased possibility of interventions such as episiotomy, use of drugs, the offer of an epidural and caesarean section. If you are worried or confused about your care we are happy to help in whatever way we can so that your birth experience will be what you wish it to be.

Induction of Labour Suite

There is a small induction of labour suite where, if you are undergoing an induction of labour you may be admitted to.

Enhanced Maternal Care

There is an Enhanced Maternal Care bay where midwives who are trained to care for women who require enhanced care or observations during and immediately after birth.

Maternity Theatres

There are two theatres where caesarean sections can be performed and a recovery area for after any surgery.

Bereavement Suite

The Bereavement Suite consists of two en-suite rooms, which are located in a separate area of Labour Ward. Access to the bereavement suite can be gained using a separate entrance to the Labour Ward. This is a uniquely designed area that allows families to be together with their baby for as long as they feel the need.

What happens when I have chosen where to have my baby?

Your midwife will talk to you about your options for where to give birth and will record your choice. She will then confirm this with you when you are 36 weeks pregnant. When you think you are in labour, or if you have any problems and are worried, please call Maternity Triage for advice.

Contact details

Maternity Triage

0121 507 4181

Further information

If you have any questions about any of our facilities or would like a tour of them, please speak to your community midwife.

For more information about pregnancy, birth and our maternity services please visit the maternity pages of our website www.swbh.nhs.uk

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Royal College of Midwives (2012). Evidence Based Guidelines for Midwifery-Led Care in Labour: birth environment. [Online]. Available at: <https://rcm.org.uk/publications/evidence-based-guidelines-birth-environment/> [Only available to members of RCM].
- Hollowell J, Puddicombe D, Rowe R, Linsell L, Hardy P, Stewart, M, et al. (2011). The Birthplace national prospective cohort study: perinatal and maternal outcomes by planned place of birth. Birthplace in England research programme. Final report part 4. NIHR Service Delivery and Organisation programme. [Online]. Available at: https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/assets/downloads/birthplace/Birthplace_Report_4_-_the_national_prospective_cohort_study.pdf [Accessed 10 January 2025]
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2023). Intrapartum care [NICE Guideline 235]. [Online]. London: NICE. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng235> [Accessed 10 January 2025].

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email swbh.library@nhs.net.



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham

Incorporating the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, City Health Campus, Sandwell Health Campus and Rowley Regis Hospital.

© Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust

ML5963

Issue Date: March 2025

Review Date: March 2028