

NOW YOU ARE PREGNANT



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The time from when you find out you are pregnant until you have your baby is the antenatal period and during this time you will receive your care from the most appropriate person for your pregnancy.

As soon as you know you are pregnant, you should get in touch with a midwife to organise your antenatal care. It's best to see them as early as possible. If you do not know how to get in touch with a midwife contact your GP surgery and they will refer you to maternity services where you will see a midwife.

At this appointment you will be given information about:

- Folic acid and vitamin D supplements.
- Nutrition and diet.
- Food hygiene.
- Lifestyle factors that may affect your health or the health of your baby, such as smoking, recreational drug use and alcohol consumption.

YOUR BOOKING APPOINTMENT

Most women have their 'booking appointment' with a midwife between the 8th and 12th week of pregnancy. This can take a couple of hours.

You will also be offered an ultrasound scan to confirm you are pregnant and when your baby is due.

This appointment will usually take place in the community although it



may be necessary to then attend the hospital for your scan or if you need to see a doctor.

At this appointment you will be given information about:

- how the baby develops during pregnancy;
- nutrition and diet;
- exercise and pelvic floor exercises;
- antenatal screening tests;
- your antenatal care including group-based care and education;
- flu and whooping cough vaccines to protect you and your baby;



your feelings

- breastfeeding;
- antenatal education;
- your options for where to have your baby;
- your green maternity hand held record (MHHR) should also be given at this visit for you to keep during your pregnancy.

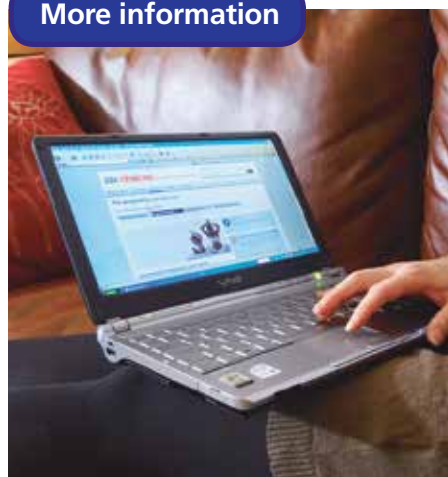
QUESTIONS AT THE BOOKING APPOINTMENT

At your booking appointment you will be asked a lot of questions to build up a picture of you and your pregnancy. This is so that you are given the support you need and any risks are spotted early. You will probably want to ask a lot of questions yourself.

You may be asked about:

- Your health and any family health issues.
- Any previous illnesses and operations.

More information



www.nhs.uk/planners/pregnancycareplanner

www.birthchoiceuk.com

www.drfooster.co.uk/Guides/BirthGuide/

www.nct.org.uk/home



- Details of any previous pregnancies or miscarriages.
- Your and your baby's father's origins. This is to find out if your baby is at risk of certain inherited conditions, or if there are other factors, such as a history of twins.
- How you are feeling and if you have been feeling depressed.
- Family history of inherited disorders.

At the end of your booking appointment, you should understand the plan of care for your pregnancy and have your hand held notes to carry with you at all times.

Your booking appointment is an opportunity to tell your midwife or doctor if you are in a vulnerable situation or if you need extra support. This could be because of issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse or female genital mutilation.

Let your midwife know if you have a disability that means you have special requirements for your antenatal appointments or labour. If you don't speak English as your first language and need an interpreter, let your midwife know and arrangements will be made.

At this appointment the type of care you will have during your pregnancy will be discussed and decided.

- If all is well with your pregnancy you will have the majority of your appointments with your midwife in the community, usually close to where you live.

- If there are complications with your pregnancy (either your health, your baby or with previous pregnancies you will have the majority of your care in the maternity hospital where you are going to have your baby and be seen by an obstetrician throughout your pregnancy.

Sometimes the type of care may change during your pregnancy, for example if your obstetrician is happy for you to receive care in the community or your midwife discovers a problem which means you need to be seen by a doctor and continue your care in the hospital.

WHERE TO HAVE YOUR BABY

Depending on your and your baby's health in pregnancy you may have a choice about where to give birth. Your midwife will discuss the options with you at the booking appointment. It is important that you and your partner make an informed choice about where you would like to give birth. It is your choice, and even after you have decided where you want to have your baby you can still change your mind. Your midwife will discuss the options that are available to you locally, though you are free to choose any maternity services if you are prepared to travel.





The options are described below:

At home

If you are considering a home birth you should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with your midwife who will advise if this is a safe option for you.

Freestanding midwife-led unit

Some areas in Northern Ireland have freestanding midwife-led units or community maternity units. These are staffed by midwives and women who are having a straightforward pregnancy with no anticipated problems in labour can avail of this option. These units can be in a smaller community hospital or completely separate.

Your care in labour will be provided by solely by midwives and if a problem arises you will be immediately transferred to the local consultant-led unit. This transfer will involve an ambulance.

You can discuss this option with your midwife who will advise if this is a safe option for you.

The advantages of giving birth at a midwife led unit include the following:

- You can give birth in surroundings where you may feel more relaxed and able to cope with labour.
- You are more likely to be looked after by a midwife who you have got to know during your pregnancy.

The things you should consider include the following:

- You may need to transfer to a hospital if there are any complications.

- Epidurals are not available in a midwifery-led unit.
- Your doctor or midwife may recommend that it is safer for you and/or your baby to give birth in hospital.

Alongside midwife-led unit

Most of the consultant-led units in Northern Ireland have midwife-led units attached to the consultant-led unit. These units are staffed by midwives and also provide a more homely and normal environment for your labour and birth usually

You can read the midwife-led unit guidelines at www.gain-ni.org

with the option for a waterbirth. These also have a home-from-home environment where you may feel more relaxed and in control. These units will be attached to the consultant-led unit therefore if you need to be transferred this will just involve moving you on your bed.

Consultant-led unit

Many women will be advised to give birth in a consultant-led hospital

Planning a hospital birth

Your midwife can give you information to help you decide which hospital you want to have your baby. If there is more than one hospital in your locality you can choose which one to go to. Find out more about the care provided in each so that you can decide which will suit you best.

General questions about midwife-led units and obstetrician-led units

Here are some of the questions that you might want to ask:

- Are tours of maternity facilities for birth available before the birth or does the unit provide DVDs?
- When can I discuss my birth plan?
- Are TENS machines available (see page 89) or do I need to hire one?
- What equipment is available – e.g. mats, a birthing chair or beanbags?
- Are there birthing pools?
- Are partners, close relatives or friends welcome in the delivery room?
- Are birthing partners ever asked to leave the room? Why?
- Can I move around in labour and find my own position for the birth?
- What services are provided for sick babies?
- Who will help me breastfeed my baby?
- Who will help me if I choose to formula feed?
- How long am I likely to be in hospital?
- What are the visiting hours?



maternity unit. If this is the safest option for birth for you or your baby, you will be looked after by a midwife but doctors will be available if you need their help. Some women who don't expect to have problems also choose to give birth in these units. You will still have choices about the kind of care you want. Your midwife and doctors will provide information about what your hospital can offer. The advantages of giving birth in hospital include the following:

- You have direct access to obstetricians, anaesthetists and neonatologists.
- You can access other specialist services, such as epidurals for relief of pain.
- There will be a paediatrician available if there are any problems.

The things you should consider include the following:

- You may go home directly from the labour ward or you may be moved to a postnatal ward.
- You should discuss all your options for where to give birth with your midwife at your booking appointment, however you can change your mind at any time during your pregnancy.

BIRTH PREFERENCES

Birth preferences is a record of what you would like to happen during your labour and after the birth. You don't have to create a birth preferences, but if you want to, your midwife will be able to help

Discussing your birth preferences with your midwife will give you the chance to ask questions and find out more about what happens when you are in labour. It also gives

your midwife the chance to get to know you better and understand your feelings and priorities.

You will probably want to think about or discuss some things more fully with the baby's father and friends and relatives. And you can change your mind at any time.

Your birth preferences is personal to you. It will depend not only on what you want, but also on your medical history, your own circumstances and what is available at your maternity service. What may be safe and practical for one pregnant woman may not be a good idea for another.

You can write your own birth preferences or use the outline birth preferences form in your green MHHR notes. It's a good idea for you to keep a copy of your birth preferences with you. The maternity team who care for you during labour will discuss it with you so that they know what you want. But remember, you need to be flexible if complications arise with you or the baby. The maternity team will be able to give advice on your particular circumstances. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you

need to. Read the chapters on labour and birth (page 85) and the first days with your new baby (page



120) before talking to your midwife, to see if there is anything you feel strongly about and want to include.





What is a midwife?

The midwife is the main provider of care for most pregnant women. Midwives are highly skilled, qualified professionals who care for women during normal pregnancy, childbirth and after the birth. You will be introduced to your midwife, who will care for you during pregnancy and when you go home. You may meet different members of a team of midwives throughout your pregnancy.

Midwives are trained to make sure everything goes as well as possible and to recognise any potential problems for you and your baby. Midwives work both in maternity units and in the community, often in a team system. The style of care may depend on where you live. Community midwives may visit you at home before the birth and will continue to care for you after the birth.

HELP FOR YOUNG MUMS

If you are a young mum, there are a wide range of services to support you when you are pregnant and after you have had your baby. Your midwife or health visitor will be able to give you details of local services.

If you are on your own

If you are pregnant and on your own, it is even more important that there are people with whom you can share your feelings and who can offer

you support. Sorting out problems, whether personal or medical, is often difficult when you are by yourself, and it is better to find someone to talk to rather than let things get you down. For more information on coping on your own, see page 79.

Carrying on with your education

Becoming a mother certainly does not have to mean the end of your education. If you are still of compulsory school age, your school should not exclude you on grounds of

pregnancy or health and safety issues connected with your pregnancy. However, they may talk to you about making alternative arrangements for your education. You will be allowed up to 18 calendar weeks off school before and after the birth.

After your return to education, you can get help with childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme. Care to Learn also provides support with childcare costs for teenage parents above the compulsory schooling age who want to study.



Family Nurse Partnership Programme

If you are under 20 and expecting your first baby, a family nurse can visit you to help you have a healthy pregnancy and enjoy being the best mum you can be. Your specially trained family nurse will help you understand all about your pregnancy and how to care for yourself and

your baby. Your nurse will visit you regularly during your pregnancy and then after the birth until your baby is two years old. You and your family nurse will decide together what you will cover in each visit. Your nurse will share lots of information with you about pregnancy, giving birth and looking after babies and toddlers, helping you to prepare well and deciding what is right for you and your family. You and your family

nurse will get to know each other well and you will be able to rely on her to help you out if things get difficult in any way.

Your nurse will help you plan for your future. You can talk about childcare, education, training and gaining new skills as well as about housing and finances. Together, you decide what you want and how to make it happen.



Somewhere to live

Many young mothers want to carry on living with their own family until they are ready to move on. If you are unable to live with your family, your local authority may be able to help you with housing. Some local authorities provide specialised accommodation where young mothers can live independently while getting support and advice from trained workers. For more information about housing, contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Help and support

The following national organisations can also give you help and advice:

Brook centres

If you are under 25, you can visit a Brook centre for free, confidential advice. To find your nearest centre, go to **www.brook.org.uk** or call the national Ask Brook helpline on **0808 802 1234**.

The young woman's guide to pregnancy

The young woman's guide to pregnancy is written specifically for women under the age of 20 and includes the real pregnancy experiences of young mums. It is produced by Tommy's and is available free to teenagers from the Tommy's website at **www.tommys.org/publications**

For information on sex and contraception, see page 135.