

## Parents-Info Choice of the place of birth

Midwives are the only professionals in Quebec to offer women the choice of where to give birth, whether at home, in a birthing centre or in a hospital. Midwives recognize that the choice of birth location is up to the woman and her family and that it can influence the course of the birth.

Each family will choose the place of delivery based on their values, beliefs and sense of security. There are several important things to know to guide your choice. Regardless of where you choose to give birth, the midwifery philosophy remains the same, the midwife will practice in the same way and have the equipment and medications required by the Ordre des sages-femmes du Québec. Recent research has shown that it is as safe or safer to give birth in a birthing center or at home than in a hospital, for a healthy woman with a normal pregnancy.

To help you make an informed choice, we have compiled a list of the main advantages and disadvantages of each location. Please feel free to discuss these with your midwife in order to choose the location that best suits your needs. At any time during your pregnancy, you can change your mind about the place of birth, with the exception of a home birth, which must be planned before the 36th week of pregnancy.

### HOME BIRTH

Home birth is considered safe for healthy women with low risk pregnancies. This choice requires preparation on the behalf of the parents (minimal purchases, preparation of the home, visit by the midwives). The midwives leave the home about 3 hours after the birth if the situation is perfectly normal. It is important to understand that preparation for a home birth does not guarantee that you will be able to give birth at home. In case of an overload (lack of midwives, several births at the same time, etc.), you will be asked to come to the birth center.

### Benefits

- No travel for you in labor and immediate postpartum
- Easier to create your own bubble in your environment
- Respect for the woman's privacy and freedom of movement
- More comfortable to express your needs
- Decreased risk of infection
- Easier to include siblings
- No constraints for meals/snacks

## **Disadvantages**

- Distance to travel when transferring to the hospital
- Alternative equipment provided by the family (e.g., balloon, pool, etc.)
- Installation of equipment on site at the beginning of labor by the midwives (may temporarily disrupt privacy)
- You are responsible for the organization and safety of the environment.
- Water birth not always possible (depending on the layout of the bathroom and the size of the bath)
- Presence of several people in your home
- You must plan for postnatal help with meals, cleaning, etc.
- Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator) (free version)

## **BIRTH IN A BIRTHING CENTER**

In a birth center birth, the midwives will be present during the labor. The midwives leave about 3 hours after the birth if the situation is perfectly normal. Birth assistants remain present afterwards to provide (non-medical) support. Parents are welcome to return home whenever they wish (up to 24 hours after the birth).

## **Benefits**

- Harmonious setting that recreates the atmosphere of the house
- Double bed to accommodate the whole family
- Alternative equipment (large baths, balloons, birth bench, etc.)
- Respect for the woman's privacy and freedom of movement
- Postnatal stay between 3 and 24 hours with the support of a birth assistant for breastfeeding and to answer questions
- Meals and snacks offered at the parent's convenience.

## **Disadvantages**

- Displacement at the beginning of labor and postpartum, for the return home
- Can be difficult to re-establish your bubble when you arrive at the birthing center
- Being in a less familiar place than home
- Distance to travel during transfer
- Common spaces shared with other families

## **HOSPITAL DELIVERY**

Hospital delivery is possible in the institution affiliated with the birth center, which is the Saint-Jérôme Regional Hospital. The family is assigned an available room upon arrival with the midwife and the hospital team will not have access to it. Since the woman and her baby are not under the care of the hospital team, the family will have to return home approximately 3 hours after the birth. It is important to

understand that preparing for a hospital birth does not guarantee that you will be able to give birth there. In case of overload (lack of midwives, several deliveries at the same time, full rooms in the birthing unit, etc.), you will be asked to move to the birth center.

### **Advantages**

- No travel if a transfer is necessary
- No social questioning of your choice

### **Disadvantages**

- Displacement in early labor and postpartum, for the return home (short stay  $\pm$  3-4h)
- Can be difficult to get back into your bubble when you arrive at the hospital
- Baths not designed for water birth
- Less comfortable making sounds or walking around outside the room
- Noisier environment, institutional furniture (no double bed)
- Increased risk of interventions (epidural, C-section, forceps, vacuum, etc.) due to increased rate of transfer of care to medical team
- Reduced VBAC success rate
- Increased risk of nosocomial infection