

## Is it safe to plan a home birth for your first baby?

Yes, it is **safe to plan a home birth for your first baby** as long as you listen to the advice from your midwife, your GP and your hospital consultant obstetrician.

Data shows that first time mothers are four times more likely to transfer to hospital during labour (NPEC 2013). The reasons for transfer are to ensure a safe delivery for you and your baby.

You should **be aware that the risk to your baby's well being doubles if you are a first time mother, giving birth at home.** The key points from this study are available at: [www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/birthplace/Birthplace-key-findings.pdf](http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/downloads/files/birthplace/Birthplace-key-findings.pdf)

## Risk factors to be considered when approving a home birth

The following risks, if present, may mean that you would not be considered suitable for a home birth:

- Previous or existing medical, surgical, mental health conditions
- Previous pregnancy and birth history that are outlined in the application form/consent form
- Risks that may develop during your pregnancy
- Environmental risks such as distance from hospital, from midwife and adequacy of support at home.

The application form/consent form has six tables that provide more details. Your midwife will discuss these with you. It is important to ask your midwife any questions you have.

**You can also look for further information from the following web sites.**



## Useful web sites

Association for Improvements in Maternity Services – Ireland  
[www.aimsireland.ie](http://www.aimsireland.ie)

Community Midwives Association  
[www.communitymidwives.ie](http://www.communitymidwives.ie)

Home Birth Association of Ireland  
[www.homebirth.ie](http://www.homebirth.ie)

Health Service Executive  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre  
[www.ucc.ie/en/npec/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/npec/)

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland  
[www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
[www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland  
[www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie)

The Child and Family Agency  
[www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs  
[www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie)

# INFORMATION FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS CHOOSING A HOME BIRTH





A planned home birth is a safe alternative to a planned hospital birth for some pregnant women.

## ABOUT THIS LEAFLET

This leaflet tells you about home births, how safe they are and factors that help to identify women suitable – and not suitable – for home birth. Together, you, your midwife and other medical advisors of your choice, will decide if a home birth is a safe option for you and your baby.

Your midwife will be happy to explain the medical terms within this leaflet. So if you are unclear about anything, ask.

Home birth can be a safe option for a healthy woman. You are considered healthy if you have no history of medical or surgical problems that might affect your pregnancy and no present or previous pregnancy complications.

**Research shows that a planned home birth is a safe alternative to a planned hospital birth for some pregnant women.**

### How many women have a home birth in Ireland?

In 2013, 250 women planned a home birth with the HSE Home Birth Service. This represents **less than 1 percent of all births** in the country. Factors that may influence a woman in choosing a home birth include:



Availability of a midwife



Support and comfort in the home



Timely availability of emergency services



Distance from a maternity hospital

Short transfer times may not always be available across Ireland, so we have to consider the safety of home birth in relation to the availability of services in your area.

### Who will support me during labour and birth?

**Professional support will be provided by your midwife.** You may also choose to have **your partner or whoever you decide** to have with you in labour.

A second midwife, also funded by the HSE, will be present at the birth, to support the midwife during your labour and birth of your baby. Your midwife may arrange to introduce you to the second midwife during your pregnancy.

### When might home birth not be a safe option?

Pregnancy and childbirth is a process where risks and safety may change at any stage. Midwives are trained to recognise signs of complications during pregnancy and labour. If complications arise during your pregnancy, labour or following the birth of your child, your midwife may advise you to transfer to hospital care. To view the most recent statistics on planned home birth in Ireland, visit: [www.ucc.ie/en/npec/publications/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/npec/publications/)