

How to Prepare for Giving Birth in a Hospital: A Complete Guide



Highlights

After birth, expect support from midwives, including home visits for assistance with breastfeeding and newborn care.

Choose where you want to give birth, your care provider, and whether public or private healthcare works best for you.

Hospitals offer a variety of care options and pain relief methods, with all the necessary resources for complications.

Schedule your hospital appointment early-usually between 10 and 16 weeks of pregnancy.

Hospitals provide antenatal care with some offering consistent care from the same provider throughout.

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What Are My Birth Location Options?

When you fall pregnant, you will need to think about where you'd like to have your baby. You can choose:

Your care provider

Where to give birth

Whether to use public or private healthcare

Your options will depend on where you live and what is available in your area. Where you give birth will also depend on whether your pregnancy and birth are expected to go smoothly. This is known as being a low-risk pregnancy.

Most larger hospitals cater for both low and high-risk pregnancies and births. Some also offer support for home birth. This page explains what you can expect when you have your baby in a public or private hospital.

In both public and private hospitals, you have the right to respectful maternity care that is culturally safe and enables informed choices.

Make sure that you explore all your birthing options. It's okay to change your mind - find the care that's right for you. It's important to have a positive, trusting relationship with your care provider.

Why Opt for a Hospital Birth?

Both public and private hospitals provide high-quality care for you and your baby. The advantages of giving birth in a hospital include:

Hospitals generally offer a variety of care options to ensure that your needs are met.

You will have access to various pain relief options, such as gas, water immersion, relaxation techniques, TENS machines, epidurals, and more. Always check with the hospital you're considering to see if the options you're interested in are available.

Hospitals are equipped with the necessary resources to handle any complications that may arise, including emergency maternity care. They have specialist

doctors, operating theatres, and intensive care units available in all large public and many private hospitals.

If you have a Medicare card, fees and expenses are generally lower in public hospitals.

In some public hospitals, you can opt for care provided by a small group of midwives. This model, called 'team midwifery care', is primarily available for low-risk pregnancies. It is advisable to check with your local hospital to see if they offer this option.

When Should I Schedule My Hospital Appointment?

As soon as your pregnancy is confirmed, you can book into the maternity unit at the hospital of your choice. Your first appointment will likely be between weeks 10 and 16 of your pregnancy. During this appointment, you can discuss care options that may best suit you. Even if you are planning a home birth, you should still attend a hospital booking visit to ensure that you have the necessary support if needed.

It's also a good idea to start thinking about what personal items you may want to bring to the hospital. These might include a favourite pillow, music, and other things to help make you feel more comfortable during your stay.

Can I Receive Antenatal Care at the Hospital?

If you choose to have your baby in a public hospital:

You may attend the hospital's antenatal clinic for your pregnancy care, including scans and blood tests. Alternatively, your pregnancy care may be shared between your local doctor (GP) and the hospital, with some tests being done in the community.

You will meet with either a midwife or a doctor during clinic visits, though you may not always see the same person throughout your pregnancy or delivery. A range of care options will be available, but each hospital has different practices, so it's a good idea to discuss these options early on.

If you have chosen care through a private obstetrician:

Your private obstetrician will typically oversee your care throughout the

pregnancy, and you will give birth at the hospital where they practice. Most of your scans and tests will be conducted at the obstetrician's office or through private providers.

Private care usually comes with additional costs.

It's important to check which private obstetricians work at the hospital where you intend to give birth, to ensure continuity of care.

Generally, midwives will be responsible for your care during labour and after birth. Your options regarding how you give birth, who can attend, and the services available will vary depending on each hospital's policies.

Many hospitals offer birthing classes for expectant parents, which can help you and your support person prepare for childbirth. It's a good idea to check with the hospital to see if they run these classes and what is included.

What Happens After My Baby is Born?

After your birth, the midwives will care for you and support you in feeding and caring for your baby.

The length of your hospital stay will depend on your recovery, whether you've had a caesarean birth, and whether you or your baby have any complications. Some people choose to leave the hospital early after birth, while others prefer to stay longer for additional care and support. Private hospitals typically allow a longer stay compared to public hospitals.

If you go home early, midwives will usually visit you at home to provide care and support for both you and your baby, including breastfeeding advice. Most hospitals offer at least one home visit from a midwife, after which care will be handed over to community services such as your child health nurse and local doctor.

Visiting hours can vary between hospitals, so it's important to check the visiting policy beforehand to ensure you can have visitors at the time that works best for you.

Tools and Assistance

Hospital Service Finders: Use these tools to locate hospitals, birthing centers, or healthcare providers in your area.

Maternity Care Checklists: Access helpful checklists that outline what to bring to the hospital and what to expect during your pregnancy.

Birth Plan Templates: Find resources to create a detailed birth plan that aligns with your preferences and hospital protocols.

Health and Pregnancy Apps: Use pregnancy and health tracking apps to monitor your progress, track appointments, and stay organized throughout your pregnancy.

Financial Assistance: Check with your healthcare provider or local government programs for available financial support and insurance options for maternity care.