

**Patient
Information**

Giving birth in a midwife-led birth unit

Introduction

This leaflet explains what a midwifery-led birth unit is and the options available to you in Gloucestershire. If you have no major medical conditions and have a straightforward pregnancy, the National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE) recommend that the safest and best place for you to have your baby is in a midwifery led birth unit.

For more information follow the link at the end of this leaflet.

What is a midwifery-led birth unit?

Midwifery-led birth units are small, intimate, homely, non-medicalised facilities where you can give birth to your baby. Some birth units are located within or next to a main hospital with a maternity unit, these are called 'Alongside'. Others are located separately from a maternity hospital and are called 'Freestanding'.

Is there a midwifery-led birth unit in Gloucestershire?

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust offers you the choice of 3 birth units.

Aveta Birth Unit, Cheltenham – Freestanding

Gloucester Birth Unit – Alongside

Stroud Birth Unit – Freestanding

What is available at the birth units

- Birth units have been likened more to a spa than a hospital.
- The birthing rooms are designed to have a homely and relaxing feel. They are all equipped with birthing balls, bean bags, cushions and mattresses for your comfort during labour.
- Birthing pools are available to use.
- The midwives are trained to provide massage and aromatherapy to you during labour.

Reference No.

GHPI1139_06_23

Department

**Maternity
Services**

Review due

June 2026

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- Lighting in the rooms can be dimmed and some of the rooms have mood lighting tubes to help create a calm environment.
- Facilities are available to play your choice of music.
- If the staff have no concerns regarding you or your baby's health following birth, early discharge home is encouraged so you can go home and bond with your baby in the privacy of your own home.
- Facilities are available for partners to stay.
- Our midwives pride themselves on helping you to achieve a satisfying and memorable birth.

Our units have been designed this way because there is a wealth of research which tells us that the more comfortable and relaxed a woman feels the more likely she is to have a straightforward birth.

Birth units are run and staffed by midwives who are experts in providing individualised midwifery care.

Benefits of having your baby in a midwifery-led unit

There is strong research evidence to suggest that medical interventions during labour and birth such as caesarean section are reduced for births planned in a midwifery-led birth unit (Birthplace Study, 2011). The birth experience in a midwifery-led birth unit has also been shown to be more satisfying.

What is not available in the birth units?

Induction of labour, epidurals, medical input and surgical procedures such as caesarean sections are **not** available in the birth units. If these interventions are needed during your labour, you will be transferred to the Women's Centre, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Great Western Road, Gloucester, GL1 3NN.

The most common reasons for transfer are:

- If labour progress is slow and you require the Syntocinon® hormone drip to help speed up labour.
- There are concerns regarding the well-being of you and/or your baby.

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If you need to be transferred during labour from Cheltenham or Stroud birth units, you will travel by ambulance and will be accompanied by a midwife.

Transfer time will vary depending on traffic and how long it takes the ambulance to respond to an emergency call. During busy times, there may be a delay.

If you wish to discuss emergency transfers further, please speak to your midwife.

Please be aware if you need to be transferred during labour your partner will need to make their own arrangements for transport. We would recommend that you familiarise yourself with the location of the maternity unit at the Women's Centre, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital beforehand.

Can I have my baby in a midwife-led birth unit?

Providing you have no significant medical conditions (such as diabetes, cardiac problems and epilepsy) or pregnancy complications (such as a twin pregnancy, prematurity and high blood pressure) you should be able to plan to give birth to your baby in one of our birth units. This can be discussed with your midwife and your decision will be confirmed at around 36 weeks of pregnancy.

When would it not be suitable for me to have my baby in a midwife-led birth unit?

You will be advised to have your baby in the consultant unit at the Women's Centre, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital if you have any significant medical conditions or pregnancy complications. This can be discussed with your midwife.

Are midwifery-led units safe?

Midwifery-led units are considered the safest and best option for women who have no medical or pregnancy complications.

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The results of the Birth Place Study (2011), which looked at the outcomes of 64,538 women who gave birth in midwifery-led birth units, showed that they were significantly less likely to have interventions such as ventouse, forceps and caesarean deliveries.

Midwives are experienced in recognising problems early during labour and if there is any sign of complications the midwife will transfer you to the consultant unit in the Women's Centre, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

How do I decide which birth unit to have my baby at?

You do not have to go to the birth unit closest to where you live. View the information and online tours on our maternity webpages to help you decide.

You are also welcome to visit our birth units to help you with your decision. All of our birth units run tours which you can book onto:

Aveta Birth Unit (Cheltenham) – Call the birth unit to arrange a tour, the number is at the end of this leaflet. Coffee mornings are also held at Aveta on the last Monday of every month at 10.30 am for you to go and have a look around the birth unit, chat to the midwife and meet other mums who have had their babies at Aveta.

Gloucester Birth Unit – Tours are run regularly. Once your midwife has assessed you at 35 to 36 weeks and says it is suitable for you to have your baby in a birth unit, please call the unit to book onto a tour (booking is essential).

Stroud Birth Unit – Tours are run every Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm and Saturday at 11:00 am. Once your midwife has assessed you at 35 to 36 weeks and says it is suitable for you to have your baby in a birth unit you can attend one of the tours.

You do not need to book but we advise you to call Stroud Birth Unit on the day you intend to go on a tour to check that the tour for that day is running. The contact number is at the end of this leaflet. If the midwives are busy caring for women in labour, they may not be able to run the tour.

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What if the birth unit I have chosen is busy on the day I go into labour?

We always try our best to make sure that you give birth in your chosen place. However, occasionally during very busy periods this may not be safe or possible.

In these circumstances we would recommend that you attend one of our other birth units. You may wish to go and visit a couple of the birth units during your pregnancy and to have a second choice option.

Contact information

If you have any questions or want more information about the midwifery-led birth units, your community midwife will be happy to discuss. Alternatively, you can telephone the units directly, the lines are staffed 24 hours a day.

Aveta Birth Unit

Cheltenham

Tel: 0300 422 2324

Gloucester Birth Unit

Tel: 0300 422 5523

Stroud Birth Unit

Tel: 0300 421 8018

Further information

NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)

Guidelines confirmation about midwife led care during labour.

Website: www.nice.org.uk/news/article/midwife-led-units-safest-for-straightforward-births**NPEU (National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit)**

Information about the Birth Place Study 2011

Website: www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/birthplace/results

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Birth place decisions

Information for women and partners on planning where to give birth.

Website:

www.pdcap.cz/Texty/PDF/Birth_place_decision_support.pdf

Content reviewed: June 2023

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>