

# About the Toronto Birth Centre

*As experts in normal birth, midwives usually provide care during labour and birth in a client's home or in hospital. Now there's a third option available to Ontario midwifery clients who live in Toronto: they can plan to have their baby at the Toronto Birth Centre.*

## What is a birth centre?

A birth centre is a regulated, community-based health care facility that offers clients a safe, comfortable, family-centered place to give birth.

Midwife-run birth centres have long existed in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Research on birth centres in these countries shows that:

- Birth centres are a safe place for clients with low-risk pregnancies to have their babies.
- Interventions such as caesarean section are less likely to occur when clients plan to give birth at a birth centre, rather than in a hospital.



Midwifery care in a birth centre has the potential to be more cost-effective than care in hospital.

Birth centres are a demonstration project funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Specific criteria and standards have been set for this new type of health care facility in Ontario.

The equipment and technology available at a birth centre are equivalent to what would be available at a home birth.

### **Planning to give birth at the Toronto Birth Centre? Considerations:**

Birth centres are an appropriate setting for normal, uncomplicated births. If complications arise in your pregnancy or during your labour, your midwife will recommend that you give birth in hospital.

Space is limited and it may be full when you are in active labour. Clients are admitted only when they are in active labour on a first-come, first-served basis.

For that reason, you and your midwife will make a back-up plan in advance in case the birth centre is full. It will be important to discuss this with your midwife and plan for home or hospital birth as a backup.

## Who can use a birth centre?

Giving birth at home or at a birth centre is considered an "out-of-hospital" birth. Out-of-hospital births are an option for midwifery clients who are in good health and have had a normal, uncomplicated pregnancy.

An out-of-hospital birth (at home or at a birth centre) is not appropriate for all midwifery clients. Your midwife will assess your health needs throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth to determine whether an out-of-hospital birth remains an appropriate option for you and your baby.



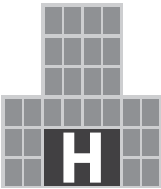
## What equipment and pain relief options are available at birth centres?

There are no doctors or nurses at birth centres. Birth centres are set up for normal, uncomplicated births. At a birth centre, you and your midwife will have access to tools to help you give birth with little intervention. (See table below).

Many hospital interventions are not available at birth centres, including induction and augmentation of labour, electronic fetal monitoring, instrumental delivery (forceps and vacuum) and c-section. Epidurals and narcotics are hospital-based pain relief options and not available at birth centre.

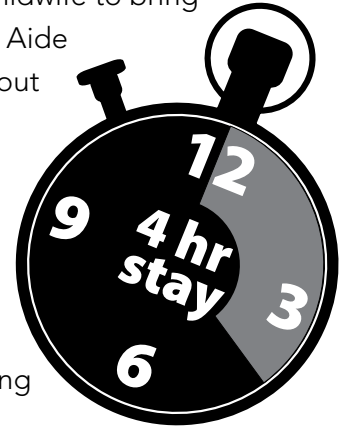
When you give birth at home or in a birth centre, your midwife has access to equipment and supplies needed for many common emergencies, including oxygen, drugs to stop bleeding, and sterile instruments.

Midwives offer a variety of pain relief options at home, at birth centres, or in hospital. Pain relief options vary by setting. Ask your midwife about availability.

PAIN RELIEF OPTIONS	 HOME	 BIRTH CENTRE	 HOSPITAL
Change Position	✓	✓	✓
Massage, Counterpressure	✓	✓	✓
Birth Stool	✓	✓	✓
Birth Ball	Ask your midwife	✓	Ask your midwife
Shower	✓	✓	Ask your midwife
Bathtub	✓	Large birth tubs	Ask your midwife
Whirlpool Bath			Ask your midwife
Rented Birth Pool	✓		Ask your midwife
Sterile Water Injections	✓	✓	Ask your midwife
TENS: Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation	Ask your midwife	✓	Ask your midwife
Nitrous Oxide	Ask your midwife	✓	Ask your midwife
Suspended Sling		✓	
Epidural			✓
Narcotic Drugs			✓

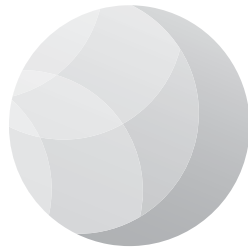
## What happens at a typical birth at a birth centre?

- Your midwife and student will tell you when to page or call once you are in labour. They will assess your labour over the phone or in person to decide the best time for you to go to the birth centre.
- You will be admitted to the birth centre once you are in **active** labour.
- At the birth centre, a staff person called a Birth Centre Aide will assist your midwife to bring you to your labour room and orient you to the birth centre. The Birth Centre Aide will provide assistance and support to your family and your midwife throughout your labour and birth.
- Two midwives will usually attend your birth, along with a student if you have one involved in your care.
- You will be able to stay at the birth centre for up to four hours after your baby's birth. At this point you will be discharged to your home. The birth centre is not meant as a place to stay for an extended period of time following birth. If you or your baby need close observation after the birth, you will be transferred to a hospital.
- The birth center is a teaching facility for normal birth. Birth centres provide opportunities for midwifery students and other health care professionals-in-training to learn about normal birth. With your permission, a student in placement at the Toronto Birth Centre may be involved in your care.

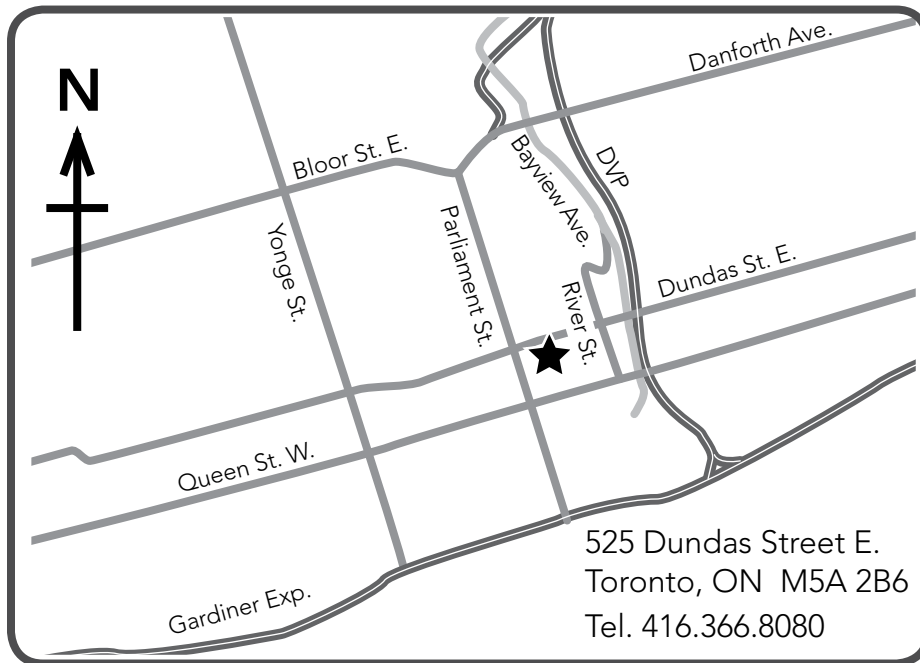


## What if complications arise?

- Midwives ensure that you remain a good candidate for an out-of-hospital birth during your pregnancy and labour. If complications arise while you're at the birth centre, your midwife will recommend that you transfer to a hospital.
- If transfer is **not urgent** and time allows, you will go to the hospital where your midwife has privileges, by car or ambulance (depending on the situation). Most transfers are not urgent and are for reasons such as long labour or access to drugs for pain relief.
- If transfer to a hospital is **urgent**, 9-1-1 will be called and the ambulance will transport you to the nearest hospital, according to pre-established protocols that are in place. Having quick access to hospital care is part of what makes out-of-hospital births safe.
- If you are transferred to a hospital where your midwives do not have privileges, or there is an emergency with you or your baby, your care will be transferred to a doctor. Your midwife will continue to support you, and can take over when the emergency is resolved, or when you or your baby is discharged from the hospital.



# TORONTO BIRTH CENTRE



*Please visit the website to learn about upcoming  
information sessions and orientation tours*

[www.torontobirthcentre.ca](http://www.torontobirthcentre.ca)

There are many factors to consider when deciding where to have your baby. Your midwife can answer your specific questions, provide additional information and support you in making a decision that's right for you and your baby.