

The Safety of Homebirth

Since 2002, the number of women planning homebirth in Victoria has steadily increased.

**“Evidence suggests that the optimal environment for a woman to give birth in is where she feels safe and supported”
(Dr Sarah Buckley, 2006)**

Large sample retrospective studies have found that homebirth is a safe option for women with low-risk pregnancies.

These are the two largest, most recent studies that have been completed regarding homebirth:

2009 Dutch Study

Examined 529,688 births, 60.7% of these births were planned homebirths.

“Planning a homebirth does not increase the risks of perinatal mortality and severe perinatal morbidity among low-risk women, provided the maternity care system facilitates this choice through the availability of well-trained midwives and through a good transportation and referral system.”

(de Jonge et. al., 2009. British Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology).

2005 North American Study

Examined 5,418 planned homebirths.

“Women who intended at the start of labour to have a homebirth with a certified professional midwife had a low rate of intrapartum and neonatal mortality, similar to that in most studies of low risk hospital births in North America. “A high degree of safety and maternal satisfaction were reported, and over 87% of mothers and neonates did not require transfer to hospital.”

(Johnson KC, Daviss BA. (2005). British Medical Journal).

Midwives who practice privately in Victoria are experienced in homebirth and carry equipment necessary to provide first-line treatment for emergencies that may arise.

A Homebirth midwife’s equipment

- Neonatal resuscitation equipment including oxygen, suction, bag & mask
- Doppler to monitor the infant’s wellbeing throughout labour
- IV cannulas, fluids and drugs to treat postpartum bleeding
- Vital sign monitoring equipment (blood pressure, etc.)
- Vaginal/perineal suturing anaesthetic and equipment

As well as carrying equipment, midwives in private practice ensure that a back-up hospital booking is made in case of transfer, and clients are recommended to take out ambulance cover. Clients have access to medical referral and consultation if required through their GP or hospital.

Homebirth in Victoria result in low intervention rates with good outcomes:

2011 Births in Victoria	Spontaneous Labour	No Pharmacological Pain Relief	Unassisted Vaginal Birth	Caesarean Section Rate
Planned Homebirths	93.3%	93.2%	88.2%	8.7%
All Births	37.2%	22.5%	53.7%	32%
Clare & Nic Midwives	97%	92%	91%	9%

*Source: Victorian Perinatal statistics, Department of Health, 2008. Planned homebirth data & Clare & Nic Midwives Data.

This information sheet was prepared as a tool for consumers by Clare & Nic Midwives. For more information, including a full list of references, please contact Clare or Nic.