

What is informed decision making?

You are the decision maker about your body, your baby, and your birth. When you are making decisions about your pregnancy, labour, and birth, it's important to understand the risks and benefits of all the choices you will need to make. This is called informed decision-making.

Informed decision-making means:

- You have the right to accept or refuse any care or change your mind at any time.
- You have the responsibility to make sure that you fully understand the choices that you are making – ask lots of questions and look at more information to help with this.

Your care team will discuss care recommendations with you as you move through your pregnancy so that you can ask all your questions – and there is no such thing as a silly question! You shouldn't feel rushed to decide on anything unless there's an emergency.

What is this decision aid for?

This guide is here to help you talk about publicly funded home birth (PFHB) with your doctor, midwife, obstetrician, and support people. It's has been made to help you make informed choices, feel more satisfied with your birth experience, and improve maternity care for everyone. The guide gives clear information about the risks, benefits, and other options for PFHB, so you can make decisions that match with what is important to you.

Using this decision guide:

1.

Read through this guide and click on the QR codes or links to the video and more information. This will help you learn more about what you need to know and what PFHB might be like for you.

Print out or open the **Publicly Funded Home Birth Decision Aid Tool** – Link below in Step 3.

2.

Watch the **Publicly Funded Home Birth Video**. Write down any questions you are thinking about while watching the video.



Use this QR Code or follow the link to view the Publicly Funded Home Birth Decision Aid Video

<https://www.sunshinecoast.health.qld.gov.au/about-us/news/publicly-funded-home-birth>

3.

Next, read each part of the guide and write down any questions on the **Publicly Funded Home Birth Decision Aid Tool**. Think about what is important to you, your situation, preferences, and plan.



Use this QR Code or follow the link to view the Publicly Funded Home Birth Decision Aid Tool

<https://www.sunshinecoast.health.qld.gov.au/about-us/news/publicly-funded-home-birth>


4.

Take your completed **Publicly Funded Home Birth Decision Aid Tool** to your next appointment so that your doctor, midwife, or obstetrician can go through your questions with you to make sure you are clear.

A decision aid for pregnant women making choices about having a publicly funded home birth

What is a publicly funded home birth (PFHB)?

The Queensland Clinical Guidelines are statewide guidelines that explain the way that care is offered and provided across the state. Their definition of PFHB is “A planned event where a woman with a low-risk pregnancy chooses a model of maternity care that supports birth at home under the care of public hospital midwives. Excludes planned birth at home with care from privately practising midwives, planned birth at home without care from a registered health practitioner and unplanned homebirth.” (QCG PFHB, 2024).



Scan this QR Code or follow the link to view the **Qld Clinical Guidelines: Publicly funded homebirth – Parent Information-**
https://www.health.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0032/1356188/c-publicly-funded-homebirth.PDF

What this means is that you may now have a choice to birth at home in your own surroundings, supported by a midwife who has got to know you during your pregnancy. This is offered to women who do not have higher risk factors for pregnancy, birth or after the birth which might not be best for the wellbeing of their baby or themselves. Midwives and other healthcare professionals will work with you throughout your pregnancy to make sure that you have a good plan in place to keep you and your baby well.

Why does my health and hospital service offer PFHB?

Homebirths are offered free as part of your hospital service so low-risk mothers can have their babies at home safely and comfortably. Research shows that planned homebirths with skilled midwives are as safe as hospital births for low-risk pregnancies. This option makes sure everyone can choose homebirth. Homebirths are supported by skilled midwives who take care of you and your baby before, during, and after birth. This helps keep both of you safe and healthy. Offering homebirths also supports families’ choices for their birthing experience.

What are the benefits of PFHB?

The benefits may include:

- **Bonding:** Immediate skin-to-skin contact in your own home helps you and baby bond together and with your family.
- **Emotional safety:** You may feel more relaxed and secure in your own home.
- **Breastfeeding:** It may be easier to start and continue breastfeeding in a comfortable and familiar setting.
- **Family support:** Family members including your older children can be present and involved.
- **Familiar environment:** This can reduce stress and anxiety, making the birth experience more relaxed and positive.
- **Personalised care:** Midwives provide focused, one-on-one attention as a visitor to your home.

Low-risk birth at home (compared to low-risk birth in hospital)	
↑	Spontaneous vaginal birth
↑	No perineal tears
↓	Caesarean section
↓	3 rd or 4 th degree perineal tear
↔	Baby’s wellbeing score at 5 minutes
↔	Stillbirth or neonatal death
↔	Babies needing intensive care
↑ more of	↓ less of ↔ No difference

What are the risks associated with PFHB?

- Changes to your risk status:** If you have problems with your pregnancy, birth or afterwards, you may need to transfer to hospital for ongoing care. Your midwife and team will continue to care for you if they are able, though it might mean having some additional healthcare providers involved.
- Emergency care:** If something does not go to plan, transferring to a hospital can mean going to hospital by ambulance.
- Limited resources:** Home settings provide less additional equipment than a hospital or birth centre setting.
- Pain relief:** Limited access to pain relief options means that you may choose to transfer into hospital during your labour to access more options.
- Monitoring:** This will be done in the same way as a low-risk check of your and your baby's well-being would be in the hospital.

What sort of care will I have if I choose a PFHB?

You will have a named midwife team and usually see one midwife for your appointments. These appointments are like hospital ones, but your midwife will visit your home to ensure it's safe for birth and help with your birth plan.

When labour starts, a midwife will check on you and support you as you progress. Near birth, a second midwife or healthcare provider will join to support both you and your baby.

Your midwife will stay for a few hours after the birth and check in the next day to plan further visits. If you have questions or concerns, you can always contact your midwifery team for advice.

How do I prepare for a PFHB?

To get ready for a homebirth, work together with your support person. Talk about:

- **Knowing About Birth:** Learn about the good and bad parts of having a homebirth and decide where you want to do it and how it might look.
- **Feeling Ready Emotionally:** Involve family and talk about what children might need, including having someone to come and be with them during your labour and birth.
- **Feeling Comfortable:** Discuss ways to deal with pain at home, and gather things like heat packs, oils, lighting, rebozo or sheet, massage rollers etc
- **Planning:** Work together with your midwife and support people to make a plan that makes you feel in control.
- **Getting Your Home Ready:** Talk about what you need to do to make your home safe and comfortable for the birth and use the lists your midwife will give you.
- **Being Safe:** Make plans in case something does not go to plan or there is an emergency. This might mean having extra support people available for other children or pets.
- **Who to Call:** Know who to call if you need help or extra support, and when to call them. It is a good idea to keep a list somewhere handy, such as on your fridge
- **Working with Your Team:** Make sure your home is set up safely with the support of your midwife and keep your birthing team involved in any changes to this.

What are the things that might stop me from having a PFHB?

The following things may mean that your healthcare provider recommends birth within the hospital instead of at home:

- **Health Issues:** If you or your baby have health problems.
- **Unexpected Problems:** Sometimes, things can go wrong during birth, and you need quick medical help. This is easier to get in a hospital so your midwife might recommend transfer to hospital if things are not progressing as expected.
- **Not Enough Help:** If you do not have enough people to support you at home during labour, birth and afterwards
- **Safety Concerns:** Your home might not be the best place to have a baby, or you might not have quick access to emergency help if needed.

Your midwife and other healthcare providers will discuss these with you to ensure you understand why these recommendations are being made and that you can ask all your questions.

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What are the options for support and pain relief during labour and birth?

Birth in your own home means that the environment and number of support people you choose are up to you as long as everyone and everything stays safe. Follow this link to view the **QCQ: Publicly funded homebirth, Examples list for preparation,**

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/1338791/f-homebirth-woman-preparation.pdf

Your midwife will talk to you about making sure everyone who will be there understands that if there is an emergency, they might be asked to step out of the room to allow for emergency care.

Type of pain management	Homebirth	Hospital
Relaxation techniques: breathing, meditation, hypnosis, visualisation, massage, touch, movement, position changes, heat packs, affirmations	✓	✓
Calm environment: support people, music, emotional support, soft lighting	✓	✓
Water therapy: shower, birth pool	✓	✓
Complimentary therapies: aromatherapy, reflexology, acupressure	✓	✓
TENS machine: transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (hired or purchased)	✓	✓
Sterile water injections: injections under the skin for back pain	✓	✓
Entonox gas: a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen	May be available	✓
Narcotic: e.g. injection of morphine	✗	✓
Epidural: injection of local anaesthetic into your back	✗	✓

Image: types of pain relief available for homebirth and birth in hospital

If you feel that you would like additional pain relief you can chat with your midwife about this. At any time you can choose to transfer into hospital to access additional pain relief in labour. Follow this link to view the **Parent Information: Intrapartum pain management guide,** https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1211100/c-intrapartum-

What things might not go according to plan in a PFHB, and what are my options?

- **Health Issues:** Unexpected problems with the mother or baby could happen.
- **Emergencies:** Quick medical help might be needed.
- **Unexpected Events:** Service disruptions, weather events or road closures could affect plans.
- **Changes in Midwives:** The midwifery team might change unexpectedly due to sickness or other human factors.
- **Not Enough Equipment:** There might not be all the tools needed for the birth within the home environment.

If your midwife or other healthcare providers suggest a change in care, they'll talk to you about it. You can choose not to accept this recommendation, but they'll explain what might happen if you don't. They'll ask you to sign a paper to show you understand, and then they'll help you make a new plan for care.

What will happen if there is a concern with me or my baby?

If there is a concern with you or your baby during a publicly funded homebirth, your midwife will discuss with you the recommendations. These might include going to the hospital by car or ambulance. Decisions will depend on your situation, plans, and choice. The midwife will use their judgment to recommend the safest option. Sometimes, going to the hospital right away might not be best. Reasons for transfer include if you want a hospital birth, need more pain relief, labour is not progressing, there are concerns about your or the baby's health, or if special care is needed for you or your baby. When you have talked with the midwife, they will contact your wider healthcare provider team at the hospital to include them in the planning, and to give you the chance to ask more questions. If it is an emergency, they may call QAS and the Birth Suite team to arrange immediate support.

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How do I express my interest in a PFHB?

Check your local hospital and health service website for how to express your interest. Go to the “maternity” section of your local HHS website and this should give you a link for PFHB enquiries and information.

You can see your usual GP (General Practitioner) and ask them to refer you into your local PFHB service. They can answer any initial questions about whether PFHB might be right for you. If you are unsure or would like further information, you can request a referral in and talk to the maternity team who first check your details.



Where can you get more information about PFHB?

Your first source of information may be your midwife, GP, obstetrician, or an official maternity advice line. You can also find reliable information from sources like health department websites, hospital websites, and official health or government websites. These include Queensland Clinical Guidelines, which are the processes used in Queensland Health Hospitals and Health Services to make sure care is given safely.

It is important to think about where online information comes from and whether it is reliable. For instance, discussion boards and social media can be a good starting point for questions to ask your care providers but are often based on the opinion and experiences of individual people and not on facts and research collected from large numbers of people in controlled studies

- www.health.qld.gov.au/qcg 13HEALTH (13 432584) telephone service providing health information, referral and services to the public.
- www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline (1800 882 436) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling about conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care.
- www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline Women's Health Queensland Wide (1800 017 676) offers health promotion, information and education service for women and health professionals throughout Queensland.
- www.womhealth.org.au Web: <https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/pregnancy-birth-baby-helpline>
- Parentline Queensland (1300 30 1300) Free professional counselling and support for expecting and all parents
- <https://parentline.com.au/> Australasian Birth Trauma Association Offer information, educational material and 'peer2peer' support for people experiencing birth trauma <https://www.birhtrauma.org.au/>

What are the alternative options if you do not have a PFHB?

- Request Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) care with a known midwife for pregnancy, birth and postnatal care.
- Request “outreach” antenatal care within a QH clinic in your local area where available, with core midwives. Birthing and postnatal care will be with the core staff midwife team in Birth Suite, Maternity Inpatient Ward, and Extended Midwifery Service for initial home visit.
- Request core hospital care with antenatal, birth and postnatal care from the core hospital midwife teams in Antenatal Clinic, Birth Suite, Maternity Inpatient Ward, and Extended Midwifery Service for initial home visit.
- Request “GP Shared Care” where you see your GP for most antenatal care, then see core hospital midwife teams in Antenatal Clinic for a check-up at 36 and 40 weeks, then core Birth Suite, Maternity Inpatient Ward, and Extended Midwifery Service midwives for initial home visit.
- Engage an Endorsed Privately Practicing Midwife (EPPM) from the community to provide care for a combination or element of antenatal, birth and postnatal care. Please note that there is a charge for services which you should discuss directly with the EPPM.

How to make the decision that is best for you?

We understand that the right decision for you may not be the right decision for others. When making decisions about their maternity care some women prefer to get the information and make decisions by themselves or with their families. Other women like to make decisions as a team with their healthcare providers and some women like their healthcare providers to make decisions for them. This decision is about your body, your baby and your birth. It is yours to make, and it is important that you understand the good sides and bad sides of anything that you are deciding about. You might decide differently if you learn more, if things change with your pregnancy or baby, or if the things that are important to you change. Before, during, and after your birth, you have the right to know your choices, understand the outcomes, and pick what's best for you.

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STEPS FOR DECIDING:

Think about the reasons for choosing each option. When making a decision about which option is best for you, it can be helpful to think about the reasons that you personally might choose each option. You might have your own ideas or have found information elsewhere. You may have had experience in previous pregnancies that influence your decision making.

WHY I WOULD CHOOSE HAVING A PFHB

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Think about which reasons matter to you the most and why

Some reasons might matter more to you than others and you might want to give this extra thought when making decision. For each reason that you have identified above, mark how much they matter to you on the star scale. This will help you outline areas that need further information.

Consider whether you are favouring one option over the other. After you've carefully considered the reasons for choosing each option and how important each reason is to you, you might find that one option is more suitable for you. Alternatively, you may still be undecided and wish to think about the matter further or ask more questions. It can be helpful to note down your feelings about your options.

At the moment I am leaning towards....

STAR RATING KEY

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It matters a little bit to me

☆ ☆

It matters somewhat to me

☆ ☆ ☆

It matters a fair bit to me

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It matters quite a lot to

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

It is non-negotiable