



Right Birth - Your Choice

Choosing your health professional

The biggest impact on your birth outcomes will be where you decide to birth and who will provide your maternity care. The choice of where and how to birth is the first step toward a healthy and happy start for both mother and child

Whether you choose a midwife, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker, general practitioner or obstetrician will also depend on a number of factors and your personal preference.

What do you want? And how do you feel when considering that want?

Look to your friends – Who talks well of their maternity care and birthing experience? Talk to them about what worked well for them. Look to the internet to learn of services available.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I want from my maternity care?
- What type of professional would I feel most comfortable with?
- What kind of setting do I want for my delivery?
- How important to me is a more individual, less routine approach?
- Do I have a serious chronic health condition? If so, it is helpful to discuss your pregnancy with your treating health professional.

Your first appointment is really a selection interview to determine if the health professional and you are good fit. It is an ideal time to have a discussion. The discussion will help you establish a relationship, to find out their care philosophy and their maternity care outcomes. Please trust your gut instincts. It is essential that you develop a strong partnership and good communication with your health professional to support your confidence during this very special time.

Gauge your care provider's attitude to your questions as well as their responses. Observe for an open, caring and informative manner as opposed to an indifferent or uncaring attitude. Look for a willingness to listen and to take heed of your concerns and questions, rather than an attitude of professional arrogance, not listening or unresponsiveness to your questions and a lack of respect of you or your time.

Below is a range questions you might ask a health professionals to ensure you are getting the service you want and to help you decide if you can work together. You do not need to ask the health professional every question – choose those that will help inform you and fit with your values. What is important is that they *can* be answered by the health professional. If they *cannot* be answered this is cause for concern

Questions to ask your Midwife, ATSI, General Practitioner or Obstetrician



1.1 Maternity Care

- Do you provide continuity of care during pregnancy – antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal?
- What tests do you recommend during pregnancy and how often?
- Throughout my pregnancy, what intervention do you use? For example: do you use ultrasounds, antibiotics or perform vaginal examinations?
- What are my choices for place of birth – home, birth centre, hospital?
- How do you support me after birth – to recover from the birth, to establish breastfeeding and to find my footing as a mother?
- What support do you provide as I/we transition to parenting?

1.2 Working in Partnership

- How do you envisage us working together in partnership towards a safe pregnancy and birth?
- How much choice will I have in my care preferences during the pregnancy, birth and postnatally?
- What are my choices for where to birth (home, birth centre, hospital)?
- How do you feel about other support people being present at the birth?
- Will there be other health providers working with me during my pregnancy?
- How do you work with me to help me cope physically, mentally and emotionally with the pregnancy and impending parenthood?
- How will you support me to make informed decisions regarding my care?
- What do you expect from me as part of this partnership?

1.3 Skills and availability

- What type of training have you had?
- How many clients do you see a month?
- Do you work alone or in a partnership with another health professional?
- How do I get in contact with you if I need advice at any time?
- Are you planning any holidays that might affect the support you will provide to me?
- What happens if you are unavailable at the time of birth?
- What are your fees? How and when must the fee be paid? Are there Medicare or health fund rebates?

1.4 Professional Practice

- What is your view of pregnancy and birth?
- How do you support a pregnant woman?
- What are my options for birthing?
- What percentage of your clients have an uncomplicated vaginal birth?
- What is your episiotomy rate and in what situations would you perform one?
- What percentage of your clients have post birth complications?
- What percentage of your clients are breastfeeding at 6 weeks?
- What percentage of your clients have post-natal depression at 6 weeks?

Extra questions to ask an Obstetrician

- When do you think induction of labour should be considered?



- What is your induction rate?
- In what situations will you recommend a caesarean section?
- What is your caesarean section rate?
- How do you feel about mothers being separated from their babies after birth?