

# About the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre (OBWC)

*As experts in normal birth, midwives usually provide care to clients 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 Ottawa: they can plan to have their baby at a 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 have their baby. Birth Centres are midwife-led and have been planned and designed in collaboration with midwives. The Birth Centres project will be evaluated after one year of operations.

Birth Centres are not just for birth – they are a place where clients, families and community members can get information and support about pregnancy, labour and birth, breastfeeding, and parenting.

## Who can use the Birth Centre?

Clients can give birth at the OBWC if they

- have received adequate prenatal care from a registered midwife,
- are in good health,
- have a normal, uncomplicated pregnancy,
- are carrying one baby, and
- go into labour at term (after 37 weeks gestation).

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.



## Planning to give birth at the 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.

## What equipment and pain relief options are available at the Birth Centre?

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

There are no doctors or nurses at the Birth Centre. The Birth Centre is set up for normal, uncomplicated births. At the 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 the Birth Centre, 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 the 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 the Birth Centre, 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 will tell you when to page or call her once you are in labour. She 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, you will be greeted by a Birth Centre Aide who will 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 attend your birth.
- 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, students may be involved in your care.

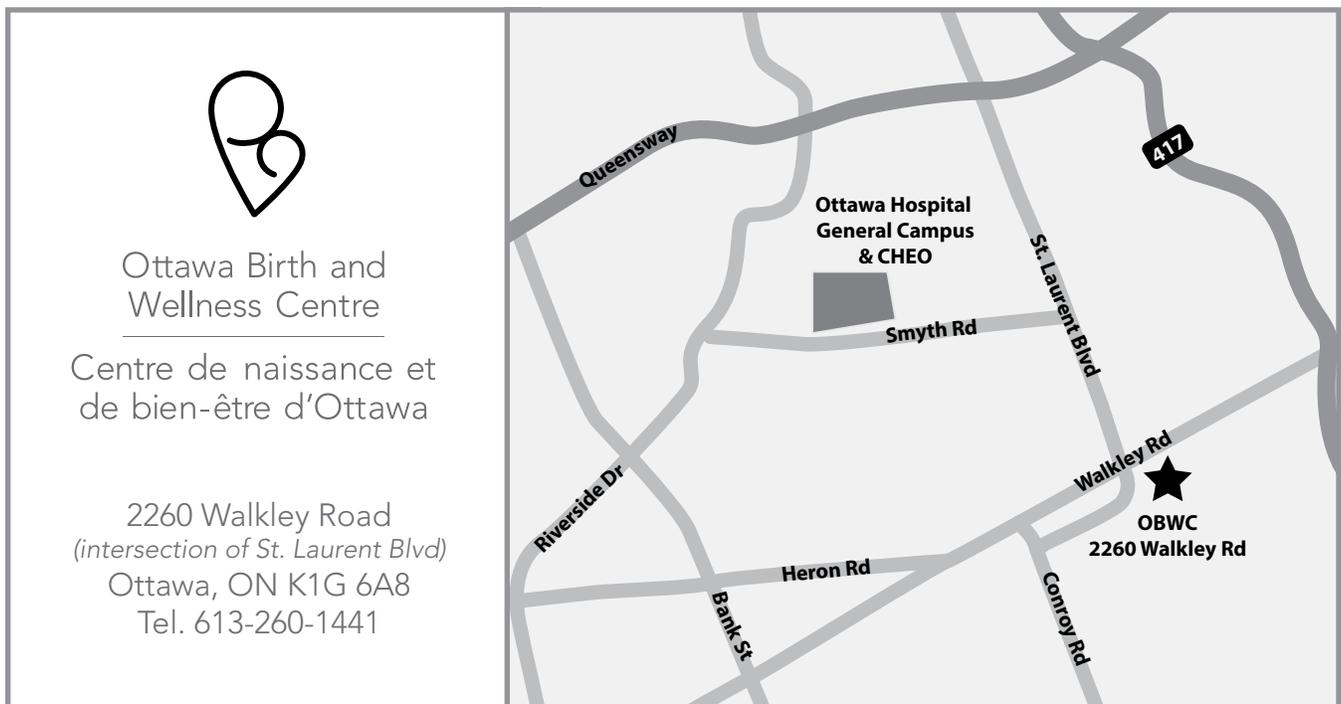


## What if complications arise?

- 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 with hospitals. Having quick access to hospital care is part of what makes out-of-hospital births safe.
- In some circumstances, it may be necessary for a doctor to take over aspects of your care. If this is the case, your midwife will continue to provide support to you and will take over your care once your condition has improved.

## 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.



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

[ottawabirthcentre.ca](http://ottawabirthcentre.ca)