

## The benefits of homebirth

**It is safer** - many international studies have repeatedly shown that planned homebirth is as safe, and in many cases safer, than hospital birth. With a trained homebirth attendant there are fewer deaths, injuries and infections, and a much lower level of intervention at home than in hospital.

**Less intervention** - the labouring woman is encouraged to believe in the natural birthing process, to listen to and work with her body and natural instincts, thus avoiding unnecessary intervention. Studies have shown that women giving birth at home rated labour significantly less painful than did women giving birth in hospital.

**No medication** - drugs commonly used in labour and birth have risks for the mother and baby and can lead to further interventions. Alternative methods that can be used at home include water, massage, counterpressure, heat, cold, aromatherapy, acupressure, breathing, movement, different positions, vocalising, emotional support, etc.

**Less infection** - mother and baby are less susceptible to infection from the bacteria they encounter in their own home. Studies have shown newborn infection rates up to four times higher for hospital birthed babies (including dangerous organisms such as MRSA - Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus).

**Familiar environment** - a woman feels more comfortable, relaxed and in control in the environment of her own home; she is also surrounded by familiar people whom she trusts. Studies have shown that labour can be compromised by an unfamiliar environment, while there are less likely to be complications, such as from interruptions, during labour at home. Discomfort and fear can increase the pain experienced in childbirth, while relaxation can diminish maternal stress, improve oxygen flow to the baby, and facilitate labour.

**No travel** - travel during labour is painful and stressful and has been shown to inhibit labour and contribute to unnecessary intervention. Travel closely following the birth could also potentially disrupt mother-infant bonding and affect the initiation of breastfeeding.

**Breastfeeding** - mothers and babies who have had a relaxed and stress-free birthing experience without the effects of drugs are less likely to encounter some of the common breastfeeding problems. Studies indicate that breastfeeding is easily established by homebirth mothers.

**Midwifery care** - homebirth midwives believe that birth is a normal life event and provide continuity of care throughout pregnancy, labour and after the birth.

**Privacy** - a woman at home can move about, change positions and vocalise as she feels free to; there are no protocols, routines or strangers to inhibit her.

**Emotional bonding** - after a home birth the baby is not removed from its mother's side. The emotional bonding that takes place in the moments after birth between mother and child and between the baby and the entire family promotes well being, encourages breastfeeding, and speeds recovery of the mother.

**Emotional well being** - a homebirth mother who has given birth naturally without drugs or intervention is more likely to feel positive about herself and her birthing experience. This, along with support from midwife, friends and family, decreases the likelihood of depression.

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*See [www.gentlebirth.org/ronnie/homesafe.html](http://www.gentlebirth.org/ronnie/homesafe.html) for more information.*