

## ***Having a Baby in Canberra***

You may have just found out you are pregnant, or you may be thinking of having a baby in the future.

For most women pregnancy and giving birth are normal, healthy life events. Different women will have different needs before, during and after the birth of their baby.

There are many choices available when you are having a baby in Canberra.

### ***Confirming your pregnancy***

Many women first suspect they are pregnant because of changes to their body. A pregnancy test is best done at least 2 weeks after a missed period. You can do your own pregnancy test at home with a kit bought from a pharmacy or supermarket, or have a test done for you at any of the following:

- Your General Practitioner (GP);
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT;
- Pregnancy Information and Counselling Service;
- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service;
- Junction Youth Service (free pregnancy testing for women up to 25 years of age).

Your GP is an important point of contact in early pregnancy. During this time your GP may suggest a variety of tests. GPs provide pregnancy and postnatal care in their practices and at Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT. GPs can provide shared care during your pregnancy with the hospital antenatal clinics or midwives, and other practitioners by private arrangement. Some GPs have qualifications and experience in obstetrics and are able to attend your birth in the public hospital system (Queanbeyan only).

### ***Options for pregnancy care and childbirth***

Antenatal care is the care you receive during pregnancy. You can choose to have a midwife or an obstetrician as your main carer. You might arrange shared care, which means you see a midwife or GP for some of your pregnancy checks, and visit the antenatal clinic at one of the hospitals or occasionally a private obstetrician. All services

provided by the public health system are free of charge to a Medicare cardholder. Private health practitioners will charge fees for their services, some of which will attract a Medicare and/or health fund rebate.

## **MIDWIVES**

Midwives are health care professionals specially trained to provide care throughout your pregnancy, birth and postnatal period. Midwives work within the public health system or privately as independently practicing midwives. You can get in touch with a midwife as a primary carer through the Canberra Midwifery Program (CMP).

If a midwife is your primary carer, they will liaise with other practitioners as needed. Even if a midwife is not your primary carer this does not exclude you from consulting a midwife. Midwives are also involved in other models of care, working from:

- The Canberra Hospital's Antenatal Clinic, Antenatal Ward, Postnatal Ward and Delivery Suite.
- Calvary Hospital's Midwives Clinic, Postnatal Ward and Birthing Suite.
- John James Hospital.

## **OBSTETRICIANS**

Obstetricians are doctors who have trained as specialists in the care of women during pregnancy and childbirth. Midwives or GPs may consult them in the event of complications. Obstetricians can provide pregnancy care and attend your baby's birth in a public or private hospital. If you need or choose to see an obstetrician you can attend a public hospital antenatal clinic or be referred by a GP to see one privately.

## ***Preparation***

There are a range of resources to assist you to prepare for the experience of pregnancy, birth and early parenting. Partners and/or support people are encouraged to attend with you.

- The Maternity Coalition provides regular sessions on a range of topics related to childbirth and the transition to parenthood.
- Community-based Childbirth Educators provide childbirth preparation programs unique to the needs of individual participants and support families to make informed choices.
- A doula is a professional birth attendant who supports a woman through pregnancy, birth and in the early stages of parenting. In the strictest sense of the word, a 'doula' is not a midwife and does not replace the functions of a midwife. However, doulas are sometimes also qualified midwives. The presence of an

- informed woman birth attendant has been shown to reduce need for pharmacological pain relief, shorten labour and enhance birth outcomes.
- Hospital-based classes are provided as a service from the maternity units. Some maternity units provide pre and postnatal exercise classes. They also run classes specifically for young parents and for women from non-English speaking backgrounds.
  - All maternity units provide regular tours to view their facilities and discuss options for care.
  - Yoga classes for pregnancy and birth are held within the community. Yoga offers the benefits of physical activity, relaxation and meeting other pregnant women or new mums.
  - The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) provides information and preparation for breastfeeding. The ABA offers equipment hire, phone counseling and it holds local community meetings. This is an important resource and support for women who wish to establish and maintain breastfeeding.

### ***Tests you may consider during pregnancy***

You may be offered a range of tests throughout your pregnancy. It is important that you understand what the tests are for and the risks and benefits to you and your baby. It will be easier for you to make a decision about whether or not to proceed with the tests if you discuss them fully with a health practitioner. The tests most commonly suggested during pregnancy are to:

- find out your blood group and antibody screen;
- check you are not anemic;
- test for Rubella (German Measles) and Hepatitis B;
- check for some sexually transmissible infections;
- check for urinary infection, and
- test for diabetes in pregnancy.

Ultrasound may be recommended to screen for certain foetal abnormalities. Specific diagnostic tests such as Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS) or Amniocentesis may be recommended if there is a high risk of genetic or chromosomal disorders. Tests are often offered as 'routine'. Remember tests are your decision and it is important you seek information and counseling prior to undergoing tests and after receiving results, as necessary.

## ***Where to have your baby***

Where you choose to have your baby will partly depend on the pregnancy care you have chosen. In the ACT you may give birth at:

- The Canberra Hospital Birth Centre (if you have joined the Canberra Midwifery Program);
- The Delivery Suite at the Canberra Hospital (public and private);
- Calvary Hospital Birthing Suite (public and private);
- John James Memorial Hospital (private);
- Queanbeyan District Hospital, or
- At home with an independently practicing midwife.

## ***Postnatal care***

Postnatal care is the care you receive after the birth of your baby.

- The women on the Canberra Midwifery Program (CMP) who birth in the Birth Centre are welcome to stay up to 24 hours, then receive care at home for up to 14 days. Some CMP women need or choose to stay longer in hospital after their birth, and are transferred to the Canberra Hospital Postnatal Ward where they are cared for by postnatal ward midwives. CMP midwives continue to care for these women once they are home.
- If you give birth in the Delivery Suite at the Canberra Hospital or the Birthing Suite at Calvary Hospital, you will receive postnatal care from the postnatal ward midwives and/or Midcall.
- Midcall operates from The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital, providing women with a midwifery home visiting service. Postnatal care is provided for up to 14 days after the birth of your baby. The number of home visits is dependant on individual needs as assessed by the midwives.
- Women who choose to birth at John James Hospital receive care from midwives on the postnatal ward. Women who choose to discharge early can access the Canberra Hospital or Calvary Hospital Midcall program.
- At Queanbeyan Hospital, care is provided by midwives. If you choose to go home early, the hospital provides a home midwifery visiting service.
- If you choose an independently practicing midwife, she will provide postnatal care.
- Maternal and child health nurses in ACT Health's Child, Youth and Women's Program (CYWP) provide ongoing care for you and your baby. They also run a series of helpful workshops about early parenting. The group setting allows you to meet other parents with newborns and infants.
- You may choose your GP to provide ongoing care for you and your baby during and after the early days.

## ***Pregnancy and employment***

### **STAYING AT WORK**

Many women continue in their usual jobs throughout their pregnancies. Other women are able to arrange to do different duties as necessary. To apply for maternity leave, you need documentation stating the expected date of your baby's birth. Some employers require a medical certificate if you continue working during the 6 weeks before you are due to give birth.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT**

If you are unemployed or have a low income, you may be eligible for income support payments. For more information, contact Centrelink or the Social Worker at your hospital.

### **GOING BACK TO WORK**

If you are planning to return to work soon after your baby is born, you must consider childcare options early in your pregnancy. The following services are available:

- Childcare Centres (public and private);
- Family Day Care;
- Occasional Care, or
- Private childcare agencies or carers.

If you would like information about continuing breastfeeding after you return to work, the Australian Breastfeeding Association can provide information to support this decision.

### ***Some useful websites***

Australian Breastfeeding Association: [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

Australian College of Midwives: [www.acmi.org.au](http://www.acmi.org.au)

Birth: [www.birth.com.au](http://www.birth.com.au)

Birth International: [www.acegraphics.com.au](http://www.acegraphics.com.au)

Birthwise: <http://users.bigpond.net.au/birthwise>

Canberra Mothercraft Society 'Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre': [www.cmsinc.org.au](http://www.cmsinc.org.au)

Canberra and Region Multiple Birth Association: [www.carmba.org.au](http://www.carmba.org.au)

Homebirth Access Sydney: [www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)

National Council of Single Mothers & their Children: [www.ncsmc.org.au](http://www.ncsmc.org.au)

Ninemonths: [www.ninemonths.com.au](http://www.ninemonths.com.au)

ParentLink: [www.parentlink.act.gov.au](http://www.parentlink.act.gov.au)

Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond: [www.pregnancy.com.au](http://www.pregnancy.com.au)  
ACT Health: [www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)  
The Maternity Coalition: [www.maternitycoalition.org.au](http://www.maternitycoalition.org.au)  
Well Women's website: [www.rwh.org.au/wellwomens](http://www.rwh.org.au/wellwomens)  
Centrelink: [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

### ***Good books to read***

There are many good books about pregnancy, childbirth and parenting that are available from Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and the public libraries in your local area. Some suggested titles are:

**Baby Love** by Robyn Barker.  
**Birthing from Within** by Pam England and Rob Horowitz.  
**Breastfeeding I Can Do That** by Sue Cox.  
**Breastfeeding Naturally** by Jane Cafarella and NMAA.  
**Choices in Childbirth** by Sheila Kitzinger.  
**Face to Face with Childbirth** by Julia Sundin.  
**Having a Baby—The Essential Australian Guide to Pregnancy and Birth** by Carol Fallows.  
**How To Stay Sane In Your Baby's First Year** by Tresillian Guide.  
**Older Mothers** by Julia Berryman, Karen Thorpe and Kate Windridge.  
**Pregnancy and Childbirth** by Sheila Kitzinger.  
**Prenatal Testing: Making Choices in Pregnancy** by Lachlan de Crespigny and Rhonda Dredge.  
**Rediscovering Birth** by Sheila Kitzinger.  
**The Immaculate Deception** by Suzanne Arms.  
**New Active Birth** by Janet Balaskas.  
**Up the Duff** by Kaz Cooke.  
**Your Body Your Baby** by Terry Libesman & Vani Sripathy.

### ***Useful Contacts***

#### **Confirming Your Pregnancy and Getting Support**

Aboriginal Health Service Winnunga Nimmityjah	6284 6222
Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT	6247 3077
The Options Clinic	6248 6222
The Junction Youth Health Service	6232 2423
Canberra and Region Multiple Birth Association (Inc)	1300 859 322

#### **Pregnancy Care and Childbirth**

**The Canberra Hospital**

Main Switchboard	6244 2222
Canberra Midwifery Program (Birth Centre)	(phone/fax) 6244 3145
Antenatal Clinic	6244 3466
Midcall	6244 3135
Parent Education Unit	6244 3470
Delivery Suite	6244 3101 or 6244 3102
Foetal Medicine Unit	6244 3079

### **Calvary Hospital**

Main Switchboard	6201 6111
Maternity Reception	6201 6030
Midcall	6201 6177
Antenatal Clinic Secretary (Bookings and Education)	6201 6359
Birthing Suite	6201 6034
Calvary Private Maternity	6201 6585

### **John James Memorial Hospital**

Maternity Centre	6281 8730
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### **Queanbeyan District Hospital**

Maternity Unit (Midwife)	6298 9265
Parent Education Classes Enquiries (answering machine)	6298 9214

### **Preparation**

KIDSAFE ACT (Infant Restraint Loan Service)	6290 2244
Australian Breastfeeding Association	6258 8928
Maternity Coalition	6290 2166
Antenatal Yoga classes	6290 2166
Community Childbirth Classes	6290 2166
Centrelink Family Assistance Office and Parenting payment line	13 61 50

### **Postnatal Care and Parenting**

#### **Women's Child and Youth Program**

Maternal and Child Health Nurses Central bookings	6207 9977
Postnatal/Parenting Information	
Referral and Support Service (PPIRS line)	6207 9977
Parenting Hotline (24 hr freecall)	1800 637 357
ParentLink	6287 3833
Post & Antenatal Depression Support & Information (PANDSI)	6232 6277 (Admin) 6232 6664 (Support)

#### **Difficulties, Violence, Grief and Loss**

Domestic Violence Crisis Service	6280 0900
Family and Relationship Counseling Service	6162 6100
Karinya House (for pregnant women/mothers with newborns,	

without appropriate accommodation and/or support)	6259 8998
Pregnancy Information and Counseling Service	6248 6222
Post and Antenatal Depression Support and Information (PANDSI)	6232 6277
SIDS and Kids ACT	6287 4255
Women's Legal Centre	6257 4499
<b>Other</b>	
Telephone Interpreter Service	13 14 50

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