

A family- and community-centred guide to understanding ONTARIO MIDWIFERY CARE



We know that for many people, birth is a family- and community-centred event. If you are thinking of having a midwife, your family or community may have some questions. Here are some answers.

IN THIS DOCUMENT:

- What is Ontario midwifery care?
- Midwifery care and safety
- Debunking myths about midwifery care
- Tips for community discussions about midwifery care

What is Ontario midwifery care?

If you are new to Ontario midwifery care, you may not know that midwifery became legislated in Ontario in large part due to consumer activism—clients advocating and saying, **“midwifery is what we want for our pregnancy, birth and postpartum experiences.”**

Midwives are trained health-care professionals that provide primary medical care during pregnancy and birth, and up to six weeks following birth for birthing people and their newborns.

How do I know if I am eligible for midwifery care?

Most people are eligible for midwifery care. To confirm your eligibility or find a midwife, fill out an intake form (typically found on a midwifery clinic’s website) or call a clinic.

This document is produced by Learn More: Ontario Midwifery and funded by:

Midwives are primary medical-care providers like obstetricians and family doctors.

HERE ARE SOME FEATURES THAT MAKE MIDWIFERY CARE UNIQUE:



Midwives provide complete care throughout pregnancy, birth and up to six weeks following birth for both the birthing person and their newborn. This model is called 'continuity of care.' As a result, it is very likely that your assigned midwife or midwives will provide the primary care at your birth. If your midwife is unavailable, another midwife from your care team or clinic will provide the primary care at your birth.



Providing informed choice means that midwives are responsible for having evidence-based conversations with their clients, providing them with resources and education and respecting their choices. Informed choice recognizes the birthing person as an expert in their own health.



Midwifery clients have the option of giving birth in the hospital, at home or in a birth centre, if a birth centre is available in their community. During prenatal appointments, midwives discuss choice of birthplace and tailor these conversations to their client's health and values.



All midwifery clients are offered home visits in the first week postpartum. This means that your midwife brings their equipment to your home to conduct all routine assessments for both you and your newborn.



Midwives work in an on-call model. This means that at least one midwife from every clinic is available to clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call your midwife for urgent concerns or for labour assessments.

Have questions about homebirth? There are excellent resources and research available on the Association of Ontario Midwives' website at ontariomidwives.ca

Now that we've talked about some benefits of midwifery care, let's talk about the S word: **SAFETY**

Sometimes people are interested in having a midwife but they, their families or community, have questions about safety. Midwifery care is a safe, evidence-supported choice—and it may be a good choice for you!

Here are some **FACTS** about midwifery care and safety:



EDUCATION

Midwifery education programs are rigorous training programs that include in-class studies and clinical placements. All registered midwives are required to complete a bachelor of health sciences (B.H.Sc.) in midwifery. Indigenous midwives may also complete their midwifery studies through the Aboriginal Midwifery Training Program.



REGULATION

Registered midwives are regulated by the College of Midwives of Ontario (CMO) in accordance with the Regulated Health Professions Act (1991). The CMO's role is to protect birthing people and their newborns and to hold midwives accountable to provide competent and ethical care.



GUIDELINES

Midwives practise evidence-based care and follow obstetric guidelines from professional bodies such as the Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM), the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (SOGC) and policies specific to the hospitals, birth centres and communities that they work in.



REGULAR RECERTIFICATION

To ensure that midwives are able to provide safe, responsible care throughout their career, the College of Midwives of Ontario requires midwives to regularly recertify in:

- neonatal resuscitation every year
- emergency skills management every two years
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) every two years.



EQUIPMENT

Midwives are skilled and experienced at using the available equipment in the settings that they work in (including hospitals, midwifery clinics, community health centres, birth centres, urban, rural and remote communities). They also carry the same equipment that is available at a Level 1 hospital to all homebirths.



COLLABORATION

Midwives are a part of Ontario's health-care system. They collaborate with clients, communities, nurses, doctors, specialists, mental health services, paramedics, researchers, social workers, counsellors and others to provide person- and family-centred care for their clients.

Common **MYTHS** about midwifery and safety that you can debunk with your community



*Natasha Singleton-Bassargh
Registered Midwife | Ontario*

MYTH Midwifery clients must give birth at home.

FACT Midwifery clients are offered choice of birthplace.

MYTH Midwives and doulas are the same.

FACT Midwives are primary medical care providers (such as nurse practitioners and doctors). Doulas provide non-clinical support and care.

MYTH Homebirth is not safe.

FACT At home with a midwife is one of the safest places to have your baby. Find research, resources and client stories to share with your community at ontariomidwives.ca

MYTH All clients pay for midwifery care out of pocket.

FACT Midwifery care is completely funded by the government for anyone who lives in Ontario, regardless of immigration status.

Helpful tips for community-based discussions about midwifery care and birth

It is common for people to feel confused about what their birth will look like regardless of whether their care is with a midwife, obstetrician or family doctor.

The following questions may be helpful to ask each of these providers so that you can share the answers with your family, friends and community:

- Who will look after me during my labour?
- What happens after I deliver my baby?
- What kind of supports are available for breast/chest and infant feeding?
- Who am I able to bring to my birth?
- Who is likely to be present in the room during my birth?



Tips for engaging your community

- Share videos about client experiences of midwifery care:
 - » Visit [learnmoreontariomidwifery.com](https://www.learnmoreontariomidwifery.com)
 - » Direct family members to resources on the Association of Ontario Midwives' website, including videos of past clients talking about their birth experiences
- Find out if your local midwifery clinic, birth centre or hospital conducts an open house or offers in-person or virtual tours.

If you are not sure if midwifery care is right for you, book an appointment at a nearby clinic. This will allow you to see where midwives work, and you will have a chance to speak with a midwife and learn about the care that they provide. If your family has questions, ask if they can join you at your appointment. Meeting with a midwife does not mean that you have to choose midwifery care—it means that you are gathering information about your options. You have the right to choose the care that is best for you.



If considering an out-of-hospital birth:

- Find out if a nearby midwifery clinic is offering homebirth information nights.
- Invite your loved ones to visit [ontariomidwives.ca](https://www.ontariomidwives.ca). This website has excellent, public-friendly, evidence-based research and information about out-of-hospital birth.
 - » The Ontario Midwives YouTube channel has a client and family resources playlist, featuring videos of midwifery client experiences giving birth at home, in the hospital and at the birth centre; home birth equipment; prenatal care; and more: [youtube.com/ontariomidwives](https://www.youtube.com/ontariomidwives)