



ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO MIDWIVES

Represents Registered Midwives and Promotes the Profession of Midwifery in Ontario

What is a Midwife?

In Ontario, a midwife is a registered health care professional who provides primary care to low-risk women throughout pregnancy, labour and birth. Midwives also provide care to both mother and baby during the six weeks following birth. They are available to clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week by pager.

A woman receives care from a small number of midwives. You will know the midwife who attends your labour and birth.

In Ontario, if you see a midwife you will not see a physician unless there are concerns or complications. Most births are normal and there are no complications. If there are complications, midwives can consult or transfer care to a physician. Midwives provide safe and expert care to healthy women and newborns.

What does it cost to use a midwife?

Midwifery services are completely funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, so women do not pay for care out-of-pocket. Women who are not currently covered by OHIP can still receive free midwifery care.

How many midwives are there in Ontario?

There are approximately 500 midwives in the province. In 1994, Ontario became the first province in Canada to regulate midwifery. Since that time, midwives have attended more than 85,000 births in Ontario.

What is the philosophy of midwifery?

Ontario midwifery is based on three principles:

Continuity of Care

Midwives provide care throughout pregnancy, labour, birth, and the first six weeks following birth. Midwives develop relationships with women and are available to clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week by pager.

Informed Choice

Women are active decision-makers in the care they receive; midwives give information to help women make informed decisions.

Choice of Birthplace

Women may choose to give birth safely at home or in hospital. Midwives have hospital privileges in Ontario hospitals. This means that they can admit and discharge clients at hospitals and access hospital resources needed by clients, including a consultation from a doctor if there is a concern or complication. Midwives are the only health care professional specifically trained in home birth.

How are midwives trained and regulated?

Midwives complete a four-year university degree through the Ontario Midwifery Education Program (offered at three Ontario universities). If a midwife has been trained outside of Canada, she completes the International Midwifery Pre-Registration Program, offered through Ryerson University. Once a midwife has completed her training, she is licensed through the College of Midwives of Ontario.

When should I contact a midwife?

It is best to contact a midwife as soon as you find out you're pregnant. Not only is demand for midwives high, but it is also beneficial to access prenatal care at the beginning of your pregnancy. You do not need a referral to see a midwife.

How do I find a midwife?

To locate a clinic in your community, please visit www.aom.on.ca and click on "Find a Midwife," or call the Association of Ontario Midwives at 416-425-9974 or toll free at 1-866-418-3773.

What happens at a prenatal appointment?

During regularly scheduled visits to the midwifery clinic, midwives provide physical examinations and assessments, support and information. Appointments are on average 30-45 minutes long. Prenatal visits are usually once a month for the first 28 weeks, every two weeks until 36 weeks and then once a week until your baby is born. Most women will see their midwife 11-12 times before they go into labour.

What happens at appointments once my baby is born?

Midwives provide care for both mothers and babies for six weeks after the birth. Whether your baby is born at home or in the hospital, your midwife will provide care in your home within 24 hours of the birth. Clients will have about six midwifery appointments during the six weeks following the birth, including several in the first few days and weeks. Midwives monitor the health of mother and baby and provide breastfeeding support. Midwives remain available by pager 24 hours a day, every day. After six weeks, clients are discharged from midwifery care and will see their family doctor for care.

Can I have a home birth with a midwife?

Yes. Midwives provide the option of a home or hospital birth. About one in four women in midwifery care chooses a home birth.

What pain relief options are available?

Midwives offer a range of natural and pharmaceutical pain relief options, including access to epidurals. Pharmaceutical pain relief can only be accessed at a hospital birth. Many women who labour at home use water, massage and other methods as an effective way to relieve pain.

Can midwives run the same kinds of tests as doctors?

Yes. Midwives can arrange all routine prenatal testing including ultrasound and genetic screening, as well as standard laboratory and diagnostic tests. Midwives discuss the results with clients and provide information and follow-up.

Am I too old or too young to have a midwife?

There are no age restrictions for accessing midwifery care. Anyone with a normal and low-risk pregnancy is eligible for a midwife. The majority of births are normal and low-risk.

What happens if there is a problem with my pregnancy?

Midwives are experts in normal pregnancy and birth and provide safe care for both mother and baby. If a health concern or complication arises, your midwife may consult with a physician. If needed, your care is transferred to a physician (for example, in the case of a caesarean section). Your midwife will continue to provide support and resume primary care when possible.

Can I have a Midwife and a Doctor?

No. Women can have either a midwife or a doctor for pregnancy, birth and newborn care. Midwives, obstetricians and family physicians are all considered primary caregivers. A primary caregiver takes responsibility for your care.

What is the difference between a doula and a midwife?

A birth doula is a trained labour support person who provides emotional and physical support to a labouring woman and her partner. While she is not a medical professional, she can offer a wide range of comfort measures. You would find and pay your doula yourself. Doula services are not covered by the Ministry of Health. If you are considering having a doula at your birth, talk about it with your midwife.