

Woman-centred Collaborative Care

You and your health care providers working together to help you receive safe, quality care throughout pregnancy, birth and after your baby is born.

Woman-centred care means that you are the focus of your health care, and that health professionals will work together with you and your family to make sure you get the best care.

Giving you all the information you need about your care is important for you to make decisions. You should receive full information from all your health carers which should be suited to you, and have the chance to ask questions about your choices, what you want and what you're not sure of. When you are included in discussions and decisions this gives you—and other women—the best quality, safe care.

Women-centred collaborative care allows for:

- Respect for your goals and values.
- Better services because it is centred on you and your family.
- Supportive relationships with care providers.
- Up-to-date information from all carers, based on the best research to enable you to make the best and safest choices and decisions for you and baby.
- Respect for your right to make decisions about your care, or refuse advice from clinicians.
- Regular and respectful communication between caregivers.

Who does what?

Midwives

Provide care to women during pregnancy—from conception until early parenting in collaboration with other health care providers. Midwives can provide most aspects of “low risk” pregnancy, labour and birth, and postnatal care to women. They may need to refer you to, or talk with, a doctor or other services if you or your baby have or develop any problems.

Obstetricians & GP

Provide specialised care for mothers and babies in collaboration with other health care providers. They can look after women with “routine” and “complicated” pregnancies and births, and provide labour and birth care in hospitals.

Family doctors (GPs)

Also provide primary care to women during pregnancy in collaboration with other health care providers.

Most family doctors do not assist with labour and birth in hospital. They can provide ‘shared care’ with hospitals, midwives and/or obstetricians in pregnancy, and care to the new family after birth.



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council
Department of Health and Ageing

Your health professionals working together with you and your baby

Collaborative Maternity Care Information



Questions you may want to think about

Hospitals, GPs, Obstetricians, midwives and other services and carers all have skills and options that are a bit different. With so many it's helpful to ask what these are and how they fit with what you want and need.

The questions below can help you get the care you want during your pregnancy, birth and early parenting time.

Pregnancy

Have you thought about what kind of pregnancy, labour and birth care you would like? Is the type of care you would like available in your area?

Have you discussed who your main maternity carer will be?

Have you spoken to them about their role and responsibilities and what type of care they can and can't provide? Are there other members in your care provider's team?

You should be supported in your choices and have access to safe, good quality care. Sometimes your main care provider may wish to talk with or refer you to other health professionals to do this.

Have you given as much information as possible to your care provider and team about your health and what you need, want and expect during your pregnancy, birth and after your birth?

Have you been happy with the information you have received? Was it in a language you understood? Were you given enough time to ask questions and make decisions?

Do you have a partner or other support people? Have you talked about how they will be involved?

Are you aware of your rights and responsibilities?

Your care provider should give you information on the pros and cons of any options, tests etc. Feel free to ask for more information and evidence for these recommendations. A useful acronym to remember is BRAN (what are the Benefits, Risks, and Alternatives and what happens if you do Nothing).

At any time you can ask for a second opinion and you have the right to decide what care you receive. This includes not following advice or treatment (including tests) if you choose.

Labour and Birth

Do you have things you want for the labour and birth, or things you are worried about?

- Have you discussed them with your care provider?
- Does your care provider understand and agree with your choices?
- Have you planned with your carer how to make this happen?

What happens if things do not go to plan?

Labour and birth can be very intense and not always what you expect. By planning what might happen and what to do, where to go and who will you see if your situation changes you can be more in control and calm.

- Have you discussed what will happen if you need to transfer care to another health care provider either in your pregnancy or during your labour?
- Do you know who else works with your care provider?

Postnatal

Do you know who your care providers will be after your baby is born, and what role they have? Do you know how long you will receive care and where you will receive it? Have you talked about what postnatal care you want and what services or support are available for you, your family and your baby?

Have you been given information about early childhood and parenting help in your community? Most areas have carers to help with breastfeeding and other needs after your baby is born.

Have you been given a copy of your medical records if you want one? If you have a regular GP and want them to have a copy, you should ask your carer to send it to them.

Do you feel comfortable with the way your records have been managed?

Are you happy with the way your care has been provided? Have you provided any feedback to your carer? Health professionals are people too- by talking about what was great and what you weren't happy with in your care you can help them help you. If this doesn't work- you have a right to complain about your care. Do you know how to do this?

