Questions to ask your obstetrician or midwife

Summary

- The following checklist suggests questions that you might ask your obstetrician or midwife
- Write down all your questions to ask at your appointment, no matter how basic they seem, being well informed is important.

It is important that you feel well-informed about your antenatal care and have accurate expectations about what will happen when you go into labour. If you choose to use a private obstetrician or midwife, ask about how they work and the fees they charge when you meet them so you can make an informed decision.

The following checklist suggests questions that you might ask your obstetrician or midwife. Not all of the questions will apply to you and you will no doubt have extra questions that are specific to your situation or preferences.

General questions for obstetricians or midwives during pregnancy

- When is my baby due?
- How often do I need to see you during my pregnancy?
- Will I have scans throughout my pregnancy? When?
- What other tests will I have?
- How can I manage my morning sickness?
- Do I need to make any lifestyle changes while I am pregnant (for example, diet, physical activity, alcohol and other drug use)?
- I’m already pregnant. Is it too late to take folate? Should I take any other supplements?
- Can I continue to take my current medications?
- Can I drink alcohol while I am pregnant?
- Are there any foods I need to avoid?
- Can I share my antenatal care with my general practitioner (GP)?
- Do you offer antenatal classes?
- Should I write a birth plan? What is your preferred format?
- How much weight do you recommend I put on?
- What exercise do you recommend?
- Can I have a home birth?
- Can I have a water birth?
- When should I stop working?
- Is it safe for me to travel overseas? Up until when in my pregnancy?
- Will you be there for the birth?
- How do I know when to come in to hospital?
- How long will I be in hospital?
- How many people can be in the delivery room with me?
- Can I use a Swiss ball/beanbag/birthing stool?
- What will you do if my labour slows?
- What happens if things don’t go to plan during a homebirth and I need emergency care?
- What methods of pain relief do you use or recommend during labour?
• What if there are complications during labour?
• In what situations would you recommend a **caesarean section**?
• At what point would you recommend inducing labour? Do you use forceps or vacuum-assisted delivery (ventouse)?
• At what point would you do an episiotomy? Do I have to have an episiotomy?
• What vaccinations will my baby have after the birth?

**Specific questions for private midwives if you are thinking about having a homebirth**

The following checklists contain suggestions for questions you might like to ask your private midwife if you are thinking about having a **homebirth**.

Questions you might like to ask a private midwife about their experience may include:

• What is your midwifery training and experience?
• How many homebirths have you managed as a midwife?
• Have you ever been involved in a case referred to the state coroner or to the **Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)**?
• Do you have any conditions on your registration to practise as a midwife?

Questions you might like to ask a private midwife about the care they will provide during your pregnancy may include:

• How will my GP be involved or consulted throughout the pregnancy?
• How do you assess whether it is safe for me to have a homebirth?
• How do you plan the antenatal care you will provide me?
• Do you work as part of a midwifery group practice and is there someone who will take over my care if needed?
• Who else will be present at the birth and what is their level of experience and training?
• Will I have any hospital appointments and when will these occur?

Questions you might like to ask a private midwife about the care they will provide during labour and the birth of your baby may include:

• What things can I do to manage my pain at home?
• How do I prepare my home for giving birth?
• How do you monitor me and my baby during labour?
• What equipment do you bring to my home in case of a medical emergency?
• What issues or changes would require my transfer to hospital?
• How long would it take if I needed to be transferred to hospital and how would I get there?
• What is the process for booking a hospital for back-up?
• Do you have a relationship or collaborative arrangement with the hospital I would be transferring to?
• If I need to transfer to hospital, would you come with me and what would your role be?

Questions you might like to ask a private midwife about the care they will provide after your baby is born may include:

• Will you offer me an injection of oxytocin to help deliver the placenta (**third stage of labour**)?
• Are you trained and experienced in suturing? (This may be relevant if **your perineum tears** when you are giving birth.)
• Are you trained and experienced in intravenous cannulation?
• How long will you stay with me after my baby is born?
• How many times will you see me after my baby is born?
• What check-ups should I have after my baby is born?
• Will you offer my baby a **vitamin K** and **hepatitis B injection**?

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How will you refer me to my local maternal and child health nurse and what information will you provide as part of the referral?

**Where to get help**

- Your GP
- Your obstetrician
- Your midwife