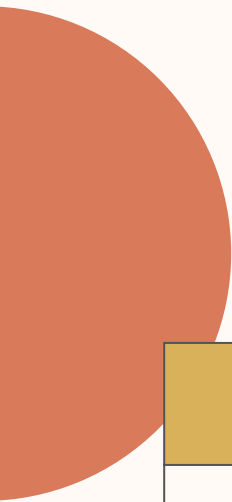




Preparing for Birth:

A Practical Guide for GTA Families



Choosing Your Birth Location

Hospital Birth	Home Birth	Birth Centre
Hospital births take place in a labour and delivery unit with access to medical staff (doctor or midwife), monitoring, pain management options, and emergency care if needed. Hospitals can be a good fit for families seeking access to a full range of medical services while still creating a birth experience that reflects their preferences and values.	Planned home births are attended by registered midwives and take place in the comfort of your own home. Many families appreciate the familiar environment, privacy, and ability to move freely throughout labour. Midwives bring equipment and medications needed for routine care and emergencies, and can arrange transfer to hospital if additional support becomes necessary.	Birth centres offer a home-like environment designed specifically for birth. In Ontario, births at the Toronto Birth Centre are attended by registered midwives and focus on supporting healthy, low-risk pregnancies. Families often appreciate the balance of a non-clinical setting with access to professional care and nearby hospital transfer if needed.

A Note About Choice

There is no single best place to give birth. The right setting depends on your health history, care provider, pregnancy, and personal preferences. What feels supportive and comfortable for one family may look different for another.

Midwives, Family Doctors & OBs

Your primary care provider will guide your care throughout pregnancy and birth. Understanding the different options can help you decide what feels like the best fit for your needs and preferences.

Midwives	Family Doctors	Obstetricians
Registered midwives provide care throughout pregnancy, birth, and the first six weeks postpartum. They are trained healthcare professionals who focus on supporting healthy pregnancies and births. Midwives can attend births at home, in a birth centre, or in hospital, depending on where they hold privileges.	Some family physicians provide maternity care during pregnancy and birth. Depending on the practice, they may continue caring for you after your baby is born. Family doctors typically attend births in hospital and may consult with specialists if additional care is needed.	Obstetricians are physicians who specialize in pregnancy, labour, birth, and reproductive health. They provide care for higher-risk pregnancies and manage medical complications when they arise. Obstetricians attend births in hospital settings and have access to surgical and specialized medical care when needed.
Midwifery care is funded through OHIP and includes postpartum care for both parent and baby.	Not all family doctors provide maternity care, so it's worth asking early in pregnancy.	Some people receive care from an OB throughout pregnancy, while others may be referred to one if complications develop.

GOOD TO KNOW

A Note About Hospital Privileges

Midwives and family doctors do not attend births at every hospital. Like obstetricians, they must have privileges at specific hospitals in order to provide care there. If choosing a care provider, it's helpful to ask which hospitals they attend and whether those locations align with your preferences.

GTA Hospitals At A Glance

Toronto

- Etobicoke General Hospital
- Humber River Health
- Michael Garron Hospital
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- North York General Hospital
- St. Joseph's Health Centre
- St. Michael's Hospital
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- Toronto Birth Centre**

Scarborough

- Scarborough Health Network – General Hospital
- Scarborough Health Network – Centenary Hospital

Peel Region

- Credit Valley Hospital, Mississauga
- Brampton Civic Hospital

York Region

- Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital
- Mackenzie Richmond Hill Hospital
- Markham Stouffville Hospital
- Southlake Health — Newmarket

Durham Region

- Lakeridge Health Ajax Pickering
- Lakeridge Health Oshawa

Halton Region

- Georgetown Hospital — Georgetown
- Milton District Hospital — Milton
- Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital — Oakville
- Joseph Brant Hospital — Burlington

*** Toronto Birth Centre is a freestanding birth centre offering midwife-led care and is not a hospital.*

Who Can Support You?



Your Support Team

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to support during labour and birth. For some families, that support comes from a partner. Others may choose a doula, a trusted friend, a parent, sibling, or another loved one. Some people feel most comfortable with a small, quiet team, while others prefer to have more familiar faces around them.

Support can look different for every family. It might mean offering encouragement, providing comfort measures, helping you advocate for your preferences, keeping you fed and hydrated, taking photos, or simply sitting quietly beside you.

The most important thing is that you feel safe, supported, and surrounded by people who help you feel calm, confident, and cared for.

A note about support:

Every birth setting has its own policies regarding support people. Hospitals and birth centres may limit the number of people permitted in the room, while home births often offer more flexibility. Be sure to check with your care provider and birth location ahead of time so you know what to expect.



A Note About Visitors

Meeting a new baby is exciting, but the early days are also a time of recovery, rest, and adjustment. Before baby arrives, consider having conversations with family and friends about your expectations for visitors. Setting boundaries ahead of time can help everyone feel more comfortable and supported.

Some visitor guidelines to consider:

- **Hand washing:** Ask visitors to wash or sanitize their hands before holding the baby.
- **Kissing baby:** Many families choose to avoid kisses, especially during cold and flu season
- **Sharing photos:** Discuss your preferences around posting photos and announcements on social media.
- **Bringing food:** A meal, snack, or coffee can be a wonderful way for visitors to support your growing family.
- **Length of visits:** Short visits are often appreciated in the early days. It's okay to ask for quiet time or to postpone visits if you need rest.

Remember, there is no right or wrong way to welcome visitors.

Every family is different, and your needs may change from day to day. It's okay to prioritize rest, recovery, and bonding with your baby.

What to Pack

For Labour

- Health card
- Phone, charger, and long charging cable
- Water bottle
- Lip balm
- Comfortable clothing
- Hair ties
- Snacks

For Baby

- Going-home outfit
- Backup outfit
- Car seat
- Blanket
- A few newborn diapers and wipes

For Recovery

- Comfortable clothes
- Toiletries
- Snacks



Don't Forget

- **Warm socks or slippers!** Unless you are birthing at home and can control the temperature, hospital floors are notoriously cold.

Remember:

You don't need to pack for every possibility. Most families are home within 24–48 hours, and forgotten items can usually be brought later if needed.

One More Thing

Birth rarely unfolds exactly as expected.

Steady, informed support can help you feel more grounded and confident when plans shift.

If you're curious about what that might look like for you, I'm happy to connect and talk it through.

Warmly,
Patrice Romeo
GLOW Perinatal Support

hello@glowperinatal.ca

WWW.GLOWPERINATAL.CA

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