



# Choosing your support person



**Birth is one of the most intimate, instinctive and personal experiences of a woman's life. Research has shown that women who have continuous emotional and physical support during labour are less likely to need pain relief and will have a shorter labour and better birth outcomes.**

Your labour and the birth of your baby is a very personal and special time for you.

Although you will be supported by a midwife throughout your labour, it is important to have another support person with you. Usually your partner or another person you are close to. One to three people is an optimal number.

Choose support people who you will feel comfortable with and who will help you rather than distract you during the different stages of labour. If you have too many people with you, it may affect your ability to cope with the progress of your labour.

We encourage your support people to stay with you during your labour and the birth of your baby to provide continuous support.

By creating a quiet, calm and safe space to birth, support people can provide you with reassurance, encouragement and guidance. This boosts the right hormones for natural birth, which reduces the need for interventions that could cause separation from your baby.

You and your support people can prepare for labour and birth by attending antenatal classes, reading reliable information and talking to the health care professionals who are caring for you.

Your support person can assist you by:

- Creating a relaxing environment by dimming the lights and have music playing. The hormones needed for birth are increased by having a space that is warm, quiet, calm and without a lot of disruptions.
- Help to make you physically comfortable by providing you with ice, water, a massage or help with heat packs for your back, place a cool face cloth on your forehead and neck and support you in upright and active positions.
- Provide positive encouragement, your support person can offer emotional support and reassurance that will help you to remain calm and positive during your labour and birth. Your support person can help by reminding you that each contraction will bring you closer to meeting your baby.



- Being a communicator by taking phone calls and passing messages onto inquiring friends and family.
- Looking after themselves. Your support person should take a break if they need to. They might like to step outside to get a drink and some fresh air.

### After your baby is born

The time after your baby is born is a very special time.

We recommend uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth for you and your baby to bond (baby naked, or in a nappy, placed against the mother's bare chest). This should be for at least the first hour after birth.

Skin-to-skin contact in the early hours after birth helps babies make an easier adjustment to life outside the womb. The positive effects on your baby include the following:

- Baby's skin temperature, heart rate and breathing rate are more likely to be stable and within normal range.
- Baby's blood glucose levels are more likely to be stable and within normal range.
- Baby is less likely to cry.

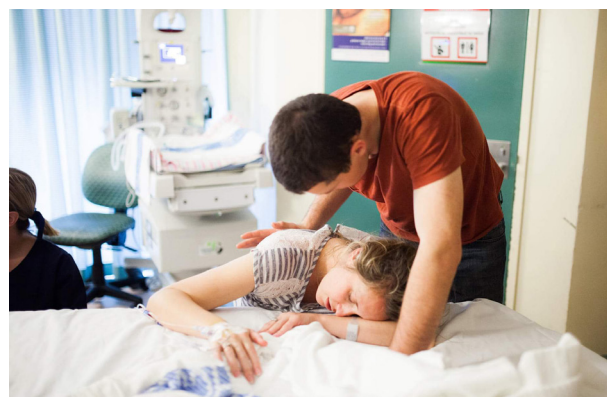
Skin-to-skin contact is good for all babies whether you choose to breast or formula feed. Mothers who have skin-to-skin contact after birth are more likely to feel confident and comfortable in meeting their baby's needs.

If you choose to breastfeed, some of the additional benefits are:

- Your baby is more likely to attach and feed well at your breast
- Your baby is more likely to breastfeed exclusively for longer.

The staff are aware that family and friends are keen to welcome your new baby however there are important things that need to be done before your visitors arrive.

Let your family and friends know you may need some quiet time immediately after the birth of your baby. This precious time is for you to get to know your baby.



## Birth Unit Contact Information

**Blue Mountains**  
(02) 4784 6572

**Lithgow**  
(02) 6350 2324

**Nepean**  
(02) 4734 2295 or (02) 4734 2294



**Health**  
Nepean Blue Mountains  
Local Health District

PO Box 63  
Penrith NSW 2751  
**Telephone:** (02) 4734 2000  
**Fax:** (02) 4734 3737

**Web:** [www.nbmlhd.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nbmlhd.health.nsw.gov.au)  
**Email:** [NBMLHD-mail@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NBMLHD-mail@health.nsw.gov.au)  
**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/NBMLHD](http://www.facebook.com/NBMLHD)  
**Twitter:** @NBMLHD  
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