

Why is it safer than ever to have a homebirth?

Birth at home used to be a risky business, but in 2015, we have never had it so good. In many ways, it has never been safer for a woman to give birth at home than here in the UK in 2015. Why?

Compared to say living in 1215 or 1815, most of us live in homes that have....

- Central heating
- Clean running water from a tap
- A washing machine to keep our clothing, bedding and linen clean
- A working telephone (and most likely at least one mobile phone)

We not only have more scans, screening, and tests to measure a woman's state of health than ever before, but since the birth of the NHS, most of us have one and sometimes several hospital units within an hour's drive from where we live with equipment which was not formerly available to help women and their babies, should they need it.

The modern homebirth midwife has skills and life-saving equipment to assist both the mother and baby, and sophisticated backup, which was most certainly not available to her had she been working in 1215 or 1815. In the unlikely event that we should need any extra assistance, we no longer have to walk or drive in a horse and cart for help, but have access to cars, trains, taxis, buses and ambulances, and instead of dirt roads

or even *no* roads, we have tarmac roads, and access to A-roads and even motorways.

We also know more than ever about hygiene. Women died of 'childbed fever' in the hundreds of thousands in previous centuries because they were attended to during their births by male doctors who may have been to other births, operations, and even autopsies without washing their hands in between patients. Now we know better, and this common cause of maternal death has thankfully been mostly eradicated.

In 2015 we have access to a much wider, more varied diet, including supplements and superfoods, and we are better educated about diet than ever. Thankfully we aren't squeezing our internal organs out of shape with tight corsets any more either!

Women have better access to information about their body than at any other time in history. We can watch births on YouTube, and learn from literally thousands of books, blogs, and websites that exist to educate us women, in many languages. The age of information and social media means women are sharing their birth stories and learning from them across a broader demographic than ever before, which can only be a positive thing.

The Home Birth Chat Group on Facebook is an excellent place to come and ask questions in a safe place (it is a closed group), and with over 3,200 members, the discussions are sure to get you thinking in lots of interesting new ways about homebirth! Where else can you take part in dynamic, real-time conversations about homebirth

safety with other mothers, NHS and Independent midwives, birth doulas and other birth professionals? Until modern times it simply was not possible for women to gain so many insights, support and different perspectives from across the globe to help them as they prepared for birth at home. Women have never been so well informed!

So what is this leaflet trying to demonstrate? Well according to The Birthplace Study, and new 'Nice guidelines', home is as safe as hospital for women with low-risk pregnancies, particularly so for women having their second child or more.

It is worth remembering that neither home nor hospital can ever guarantee *absolute* safety – there is no such thing. And, there are actually some risks that *increase* when we go to hospital to have our baby. It may surprise women to know they actually face a slightly higher risk of interventions, caesareans and infections at hospital. Modern hospitals are run on a bit of a conveyor belt sadly!

We will continue to see closures of homebirth services across the country unless more women come forwards and demand those services and see homebirth as a sensible, valid and safe option.

You can read all about The Birthplace Study and its findings here:

<http://www.nct.org.uk/professional/research/pr-egnancy-birth-and-postnatal-care/birth/birthplace-study>

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/instituteforwomenshealth/iwh_news/20140519