

The Alongside Midwifery Unit Centre of Excellence



A midwife will be on the AMU at all times (referred to as a Hospitalist Midwife) and is available for early labour assessments, telephone advice and assisting in your care. Your midwife – referred to as a Community Midwife - will support you during active labour, birth and postpartum. Both will work together to deliver high quality care to support you and your family.

People planning to give birth in a midwife-led birthing unit compared to a traditional labour and delivery unit;

- Use less pain relief medication
- Are more likely to have a spontaneous vaginal birth with less intervention
- Experience higher rates of satisfaction with the birth

You are welcome to include family members and/or a professional Doula as part of your team. Your midwife can let you know what the latest guidelines are for visitors and labour support.

We encourage you to bring items from home (pillow, photos, comfy clothes, music and snacks) - your midwife will give you a list of other items. Our family pantry has a fridge, microwave, ice machine, and a kettle for tea.

The AMU at Markham Stouffville Hospital opened in 2018 and is the FIRST of its kind in Canada.

The AMU offers clients an opportunity to give birth in a relaxed, comfortable and friendly environment.

This is a separate birthing area located beside the obstetrical unit with access to operating rooms and a NICU. Physicians and other staff needed in emergencies are close by to assist if needed.

Specially designed birthing rooms provide a welcoming space for families with furnishings and equipment to support spontaneous birth, such as; birth chairs, floor mats, hanging slings, and tubs suitable for water immersion and waterbirth.

A double sized Murphy bed is readily available after birth so that the new family can relax and enjoy skin-to-skin bonding time with baby.



Options for labouring on the AMU

Your midwives will work with you as you labour to promote movement and labouring in upright positions. We know that walking and staying upright can help reduce the duration of labour, caesarean birth rates, and the need for pharmacological pain relief (like an epidural).

Birthing Balls – the birthing ball can help support you in different labour positions and relieve back pain



Peanut Balls – the peanut ball is a peanut shaped ball that can be used in labour to help the baby get into the best position for delivery.

Slings – like the ball, the sling can support you in different labour positions. The sling is made of soft fabric and hangs from the ceiling, supporting your weight.

Delivering your baby on the AMU

Your midwives will help you to push in a variety of positions that are comfortable for you and help the baby to come out. One of the options for pushing your baby out is using the birthing stool. Upright positions are beneficial because they are associated with a shorter pushing stage and decrease the chance of needing an epidural or episiotomy.



Waterbirth

Water birth has been practiced around the world for a long time. Studies as recent as 2022 demonstrate that water birth has clear benefits and does not increase the risk to babies.

Birthing parents who have water births tend to:

- Have shorter labours
- Feel more relaxed, and need pain medication less
- Have less tearing or blood loss
- Have greater satisfaction



After baby is born

During your recovery period, both you and your baby will be monitored while allowing for immediate skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding. You can expect to be on the AMU for less than 6 hours after baby is born, and then it will be time to go home! Before you go, you will receive teaching and instructions about what to expect once you are home, and a follow up visit in your own home will be arranged for the following day. Your midwives are available 24/7 by pager should you have any urgent concerns about yourself or your baby.

If your midwife has medical concerns about you or your baby they will facilitate your transfer to the postpartum unit on the hospital.

As your time with us after the birth is short, we suggest you limit visitors so that you can recover, bond with baby and receive the teaching and support needed. Family and friends can visit at home in the following days.