



# Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre

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Centre de naissance et  
de bien-être d'Ottawa

Client Information Package

[www.ottawabirthcentre.ca](http://www.ottawabirthcentre.ca)

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## Welcome

Thank you for choosing the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre, where we respect birth as a sacred, life-changing event, and as an opportunity for personal and family growth.

Guided by the midwifery model of care, we are committed to:

- the principles of natural childbirth,
- compassionate, respectful, family-centred care,
- providing a supportive, welcoming environment for our clients.

The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre is a safe option for healthy clients with low-risk pregnancies and labour. Our Centre has all the equipment and supplies that birthing parents and newborns need for normal labour, birth, and aftercare.

We offer you private, well-equipped Birth Rooms with soft lighting, cozy fireplaces, queen-sized beds, comfortable linens, Bluetooth speakers, large bathtubs for labour and birth—and a tasty, nutritious meal after all the excitement is over. Our birth spaces are anything but institutional! Similar to a hospital setting, some sound may carry between rooms.

Care at the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre is provided by registered midwives, appointed to the Centre, and supported by Birth Centre Aides (BCAs). Birth Centre Aides are employees of the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre, working as non-clinical support people, who oversee the smooth operation of the Birth Centre at all times during your stay. On the rare occasions when medical emergencies occur, we partner with area hospitals to swiftly transfer birthing parents and newborns.

Our community-based Centre is guided by the professional standards set by the College of Midwives of Ontario. We are also regulated (and funded) by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care as an independent health care facility.

## Using the Centre

In order to give birth at the Centre, you **must** be a resident of Ontario (this means that you have an Ontario address), under the care of a midwife who has appointment at the Centre. Your midwife will assess your health throughout your pregnancy, to determine whether an out-of-hospital birth is a good option for you and your baby. In some cases, giving birth here may not be appropriate for your health and safety.

You can choose to give birth at the Centre if you:

- understand the benefits and risks of an out-of-hospital birth;

- have received adequate prenatal care from a Centre-appointed midwife, who has registered you at the Centre;
- are in good health, and experiencing an uncomplicated, healthy pregnancy;
- are carrying only one baby, presenting head-down, who is expected to be healthy at birth;
- have no signs of infection when you are in labour (such as a cough, a cold, flu-like symptoms, a fever, or vomiting or diarrhea unrelated to labour; your midwife will help you to assess any symptoms);
- arrive when your pregnancy is at full term (post-37 weeks' gestation), with no risk factors present, and when you are in active labour.

Your midwife can give you more details about the eligibility criteria to give birth at the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre, and can answer any questions you may have.

## **Availability**

Because space at the Centre is limited, and labour is always unpredictable, admission is on a first-come, first-served basis. There are three Birth Rooms, and an Assessment Room that can be used as a Birth Room if needed. If all these rooms are in use, you cannot be admitted. You need to have a back-up plan to give birth, either at home or at a hospital. Be sure to develop this plan with your midwife before your labour begins.

## **Accessibility**

The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre is committed to serving all clients and their families, including people with disabilities. Designated parking is available, service animals are welcome, and all areas of the Centre are wheelchair-accessible. Please contact us if you have specific questions.

## **A Safe Space**

At the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre, we aim to create a place that is safe and welcoming for people of all backgrounds, family types, and identities. We welcome and encourage you to incorporate your own cultural practices into your birth experience, and to speak with your midwife before your birth about any special needs or wants that you may have. We recognize that families come in many different shapes and sizes, and that birthing parents can be any gender, and strive to ensure that any and all people have a positive, affirming experience during their labour and birth at the Centre.

## At the Centre

If you would like to give birth at the Centre, discuss the option with your midwife. She will register you, and submit your records to us. You can book a tour at any point to visit the Centre, meet our staff, and see the beautiful Birth Rooms (see the “Birth Centre Tours” section of our website).

If your pregnancy proceeds normally, at 36 weeks your midwife will confirm with us that it is still appropriate for you to give birth here. She will also make sure that you know how, and when, to contact her once your labour begins. **You must speak with your midwife before coming to the Centre.** She will contact the BCAs to let them know that you’re coming.

If you arrive at the Centre before the midwife, the BCA will welcome you into the family lounge or Assessment Room to wait. However, because BCAs do not provide clinical care, they cannot assess you or admit you. If for any reason your midwife cannot arrive before your labour is too far advanced, you may have to be transferred to hospital. Your midwife may check your progress in an Assessment Room, and will be welcomed into a Birth Room once you are in active labour. You will also be welcome to use the family lounge or walk outside on the patio. As with any midwifery birth, a second midwife will be called to be present at the birth.

## During Your Labour

The Centre’s equipment and services are designed for normal, uncomplicated births that need little intervention. This means that no epidurals or narcotics are available. If you feel that you need these, you can be transferred to a hospital.

We offer a number of options to help support you during labour. First among these is your midwife’s skill in the management of labour and birth. Other comfort measures include:

- A private, secure environment where you can feel safe and supported.
- The knowledge that your options will be fully explained, and your choices respected as an active participant in your care.
- The presence of a familiar caregiver with whom you feel comfortable.
- The support and encouragement, if you wish, of partners, family, friends, or doulas.
- Large birth tubs in which you can labour and birth.
- The freedom to eat and drink if desired.
- The freedom to move about and change positions throughout your labour and birth.
- The use of equipment such as birth stools, balls, slings, and floor mats, to help with mobility.

- Touch therapies such as massage, acupuncture, pressure points, and other techniques, depending on the comfort level and skills of your support people.
- Hydrotherapy: using warm water in a shower or a tub.
- Sterile water injections for back pain.
- TENS machines: transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, an alternative to medication.
- Nitrous oxide (commonly known as laughing gas).

## **Midwifery Students**

The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre has a strong commitment to education, and to sharing our model of care. We are a teaching facility for normal birth, allowing midwifery students and other professionals to learn about normal out-of-hospital births. We partner with the Ontario Midwifery Education Program to provide community placements. You may be asked if a student may observe your birth, or assist the midwife. Your permission is always required for this, and your wishes are always respected.

## **Safety, Consultations, & Transfers to Hospital**

Our midwives follow all the standards set out by the College of Midwives of Ontario, as well as our own policies and procedures. Your midwife will assess your health (and your baby's) during your pregnancy, to ensure that a birth at the Centre is the right choice for you. If any complications arise any time during your pregnancy, your midwife will recommend a birth at the hospital where she has privileges.

Transfers to a hospital during planned out-of-hospital births are infrequent. When these transfers do occur they are usually not urgent, are done by car rather than an ambulance, and still result in a normal, vaginal birth. The most common reasons for going to hospital are:

- the need for pain relief (such as an epidural) during a long, slow labour,
- procedures to speed up labour.

These treatments are not available at the Centre, and neither are forceps or vacuum deliveries, nor Caesarean sections. For such interventions, you will need to be transferred to a hospital.

Very rarely, if complications develop during labour or birth, a birthing person or a newborn may need emergency medical attention. If a baby is in respiratory distress, midwives are fully trained in resuscitation procedures, and most full-term babies respond very quickly to these measures. But if there are more serious concerns about a baby's or parent's health, during or after labour or birth, then an urgent transfer may be needed.

In these unlikely cases, the Centre has well-planned procedures in place to ensure a smooth transfer. With the help of nearby Emergency Medical Service (paramedics), who are trained in the safe and speedy transfer of birthing parents and babies from the Centre, families are moved to either the General Campus of the Ottawa Hospital or to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. The midwife accompanies the birthing person in the ambulance, and ensures that the birthing person and newborn remain together as much as possible. If responsibility for care passes to a doctor at the hospital, the midwife will take over again when appropriate.

If a transfer by ambulance is necessary, OHIP will bill you for the standard ambulance co-pay of \$45. For more information on this fee, including categories of exemption, visit <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/ohip/amb.aspx>.

Whenever a transfer of care from the Centre takes place, the circumstances are reviewed by our Quality Advisor to ensure that everything was done appropriately.

## Parent and Baby Care

After the birth, you and your baby may remain in the Birth Room for up to four hours. Skin-to-skin contact and early breastfeeding are encouraged, to support bonding. While you rest after labour, and get to know your newborn, you may enjoy a hot meal (see *Food at the Centre*).

Your midwife will provide all the care your newborn needs, including:

- a full physical exam and assessment,
- any routine medications,
- breastfeeding support (if you plan to feed your baby formula, you will need to provide your own supplies)
- recommendations for follow-up care,
- instructions on how to register the birth and get a birth certificate,
- health card (OHIP) forms for the baby,
- birth notification cards.

If you wish to keep your placenta to bring home, please bring a cooler, and an ice pack. We will keep the placenta in our refrigerator until you are ready to leave, and then transfer it to your cooler.

## Food at the Centre

After giving birth, every birthing person deserves a delicious hot meal—and we are happy to serve it to them in the Birth Room whenever they are ready for it. We carry a range of meals from The Red Apron, as well as ingredients to prepare breakfast sandwiches or eggs and toast.

We strive to provide options for clients who are vegetarian, vegan, Halal, or need gluten-free choices. We also usually have fresh fruit, juice, toast, and other snacks available. If you have any significant food sensitivities, allergies or dietary restrictions, you may want to bring your own food (note that we are not a nut-free facility). There is a fridge with freezer, a microwave, toaster oven, kettle, and Keurig coffeemaker available to clients and families.

We are only able to provide complimentary food for the birthing person. Partners, children, support people and other family members may bring food with them. Red Apron meals are available to buy for \$10 each (cash, cheque, or credit card), or staff can also give you menus from nearby restaurants that deliver, or that offer take-out. As well, there is a Metro grocery store just across the street.

## Families and Visitors: Our Policies

At the Centre, unlike at most hospitals, you may invite whomever you wish to accompany and support you before, during, and after your baby's birth. Our Family Lounge is available for visitors to gather in, and we strive to make our facility a welcoming place for everyone.

However, to ensure that all our clients have a safe and pleasant experience at the Centre, there are guidelines in place for visitors. These are outlined below.

- To ensure the safety of staff, clients, and midwives, any guest who rings at the Birth Centre entrance will be asked to wait until the BCA can verify their identity. Please inform your guests that they may need to wait outside for a few minutes when they arrive.
- The Centre does not provide food or drink for families or support people. Feel free to bring your own, which you can store in our big fridge, or bring cash to purchase a meal (see above).
- We reserve the right to restrict access to any visitors who appear to be infectious. This policy is designed to protect the health and safety of our clients, their families and visitors, and our midwives and staff. Newborns and parents who have just given birth are especially at risk for infection, so everyone who enters the Centre is routinely screened for signs of:
  - coughs, colds, or flu-like symptoms,
  - fever,
  - vomiting or diarrhea,
  - conjunctivitis (pink eye),
  - an unusual rash.



If any of these symptoms are present, the visitor will not be admitted to the Centre. If symptoms develop during their stay, visitors will be asked to leave.

- Children are welcome to visit; however, all children under 12 must be accompanied at all times by a caregiver (who is not the birthing person, or their primary support person). This caregiver must be fully responsible for the children, who must never be left unattended or unsupervised. Bring enough food, drinks, toys, books, etc., for the children, and have a back-up plan for their care in case labour lasts a long time.
- Because many people are allergic or sensitive to the chemicals used in scented products such as perfume, hair spray, cologne, etc., we ask that all our clients, staff, midwives, and visitors refrain from wearing scents.
- The Centre is a non-smoking facility. Anyone who wishes to smoke must go outside, and remain at least 9 metres away from any exit or entrance. The patio is also a non-smoking zone.
- To comply with City fire regulations, no candles or other sources of open flame are allowed.
- Smudging is allowed and encouraged at the Centre. Please talk to your midwife about the specific safety requirements.
- The Centre has a zero-tolerance policy against discriminating, aggressive, hurtful, or violent language or actions. Anyone who engages in such harassment, or who breaches privacy or confidentiality, will be asked to leave. If necessary, staff will call Emergency Services and/or the Ottawa Police.

## Leaving the Centre

Because the Centre is not designed for an extended stay after the birth, you will be discharged to go home within four hours. Your midwife will give you clear instructions about what to expect, how to cope with any problems, and when to contact her for your first postpartum visit (usually within 24 hours). If you or your baby need more observation or care, you will be transferred to a hospital.

When you take your baby home, you will need the appropriate supplies: baby clothes, diapers, a blanket, and a certified infant car seat (see *What to Bring*).

## Your Feedback

We encourage you to complete an evaluation form at the end of your stay as well as an electronic survey that will be sent to you a few weeks after your visit. This important feedback allows us to measure your satisfaction with the Centre, and to address any concerns you may have. We are always looking for ways to improve, so feel free to give us any kind of feedback (see *Contact Us*). As well, we welcome testimonials, like your birth story, or how you felt using the Birth Centre, to post on our

website and our Facebook page. The BCA will offer to take a photo of your family and midwife to share on our “Baby Wall of Fame” at the Centre. No photos or information will ever be shared without your permission.

## Your Privacy

The Centre is committed to safeguarding the confidentiality of your personal information. We follow the standards of Ontario’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*. The only time information is shared is if you need to be transferred to hospital. Otherwise, no details about your health history or delivery will be ever disclosed, to anyone, without your explicit consent. Most midwives will give you a copy of your own client chart when you are discharged from care. If you have any privacy concerns, you may contact the Centre’s Executive Director, who serves as our Privacy Officer (see *Contact Us*).

## Your Ongoing Wellness

In addition to our beautiful birth facilities, we also house a Wellness Centre, offering a wide range of classes and services, including:

- Pelvic floor physiotherapy,
- Free breastfeeding support,
- Pre- and post-natal yoga classes,
- Prenatal education classes,
- Infant first aid classes,
- Parent and baby music classes,
- and much more!

To find out about all of the classes and services available at the Centre, visit our website at [www.ottawabirthcentre.ca/wellness-centre](http://www.ottawabirthcentre.ca/wellness-centre).

## Contact Us

Phone: 613-260-1441

Email: [info@ottawabirthcentre.ca](mailto:info@ottawabirthcentre.ca)

Website: [www.ottawabirthcentre.ca](http://www.ottawabirthcentre.ca)

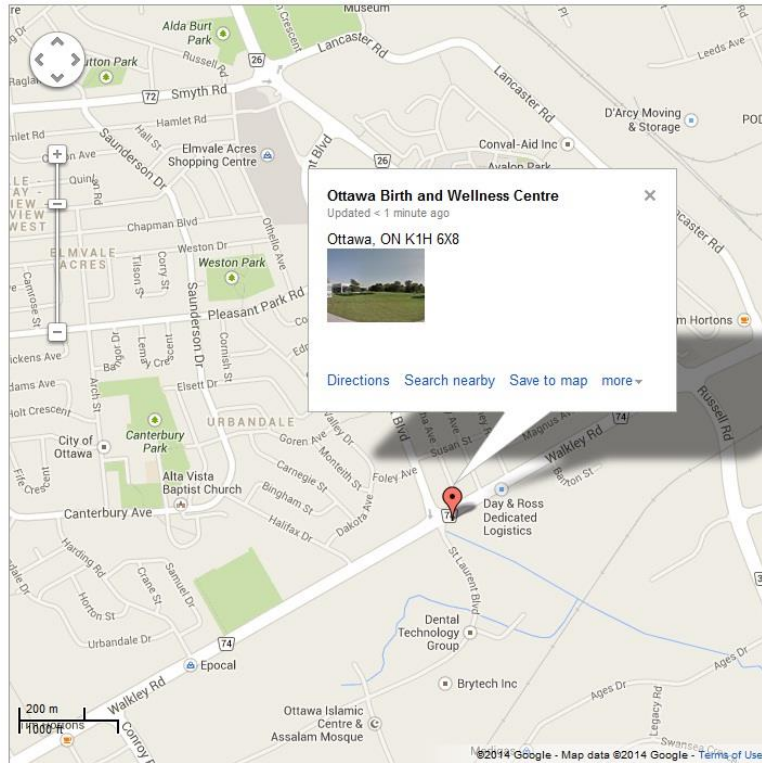
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ottawabirhandwellness](http://www.facebook.com/ottawabirhandwellness)

Executive Director, Elyse Banham: [elyse.banham@ottawabirthcentre.ca](mailto:elyse.banham@ottawabirthcentre.ca)

**Remember: when you are in labour, be sure to contact your midwife before coming to the Centre.**

# How to Find Us

The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre is located at 2260 Walkley Road, at the south-east corner of St. Laurent Blvd. We're in the **Canon building**, with the big red signs. The parking lot and the Birth Centre entrance is at the rear (**east side**) of the building (look for the "Birth Centre" sign over the door).



*Our sign along Walkley Road*



*We are located in the Canon building*



*Look for the Birth Centre entrance on the rear (east side) of the building*

# What to Bring to the Centre: A Checklist

## For the birthing person

- your OHIP card, if you have one, and other identification
- loose, comfortable clothes and bathrobe for the birth
- comfy slip-on shoes, such as slippers, moccasins or crocs
- extra comfortable, roomy underwear, and socks
- clothes, a swimsuit, or a sports bra to wear in the tub, if you wish, and a plastic bag to bring them home
- a bath pillow (the stick-on inflatable ones are best)
- foam pads or a yoga mat, to kneel on in the birth tub
- lip balm
- toiletries such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste and brush; also hair ties, clips, or bands
- any medication you need to take
- loose, comfortable clothes to wear home
- large and super-absorbent sanitary or incontinence pads
- favourite snacks and drinks, including gum, popsicles, or lollipops (your mouth may be dry during labour)

## For support people

- change of clothes, extra T-shirt
- bathing shorts or suit, if you plan to use the tub, and a plastic bag to bring them home
- favourite snacks and drinks
- toothbrush, mouthwash, or gum, for after snacking
- a cell phone, camera, or video camera—and a charger or spare batteries.

## For babies

- baby clothes: undershirt, sleeper, outerwear for the trip home, hat
- a few diapers
- receiving blanket
- bottles and formula, if you are not planning to breastfeed
- infant car seat.

**For everyone, including visitors**

- in winter, indoor shoes (crocs are available at the Centre)
- favourite drinks and snacks for everyone present, including children
- music, if you wish, on your phone or other device (all Birth Rooms have a Bluetooth-enabled speaker)
- battery-powered candles, if you wish, for low light (no open flame is allowed in the Centre)
- toys, books, food, clothes, etc., for any children present.

**What we provide**

Beyond the obvious things, we are able to offer:

- towels, pillows, and other linens you will need
- crushed ice
- Bluetooth-enabled speaker, with an auxiliary cable for non-Bluetooth devices
- hairdryer
- birth stool
- birth balls
- crocs, if you forget indoor footwear
- toys and books for kids in our Family Lounge
- free Wifi
- cable TV in the Family Lounge