



## **Burlington & Area Midwives Inc.**

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### **Our Midwives**

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Burlington & Area Midwives is a group practice of midwives serving Burlington, Waterdown and the surrounding areas. We have compiled this document to provide you with information about the services you can expect from us. It is intended to help you make an informed decision about whether midwifery care is appropriate for you. While under the care of midwives we hope to develop a collaborative working relationship with you. We feel that the best care is provided when women and their families have a complete understanding of the philosophy and extent of midwifery services.

#### **What Is A Midwife?**

The following definition was developed by the World Health Organization and has been endorsed by health planning groups in Ontario:

*A midwife is a person who, having been regularly admitted to a midwifery education program duly recognized in a country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery. She must be able to give the necessary supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct deliveries on her own responsibility and to care for the newborn infant. This care includes preventative measures, the detection of abnormal conditions in mother and child, the procurement of medical assistance and the execution of emergency measures in the absence of medical help. She has an important task in health counseling and education, not only for patients but also within the family and the community. The work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood and extends to certain areas of gynaecology, family planning and child care. She may practice in hospitals, clinics, health units, domiciliary conditions, or in any other service.*

## **Midwifery in Ontario**

Since December 1993, midwives have been covered under legislation that sets out the provisions for many health care professionals in Ontario. All members of Burlington & Area Midwives are registered by the College of Midwives of Ontario, who set the standards and educational requirements. All aspects of midwifery care are publicly funded under the Ontario Ministry of Health.

## **Prenatal Care**

Adequate prenatal care is required for all women preparing for birth and is a safeguard for your health and your unborn baby. It offers you the opportunity to learn about the changes in your body as your pregnancy advances. Most often care begins with an initial interview approximately 1 hour in length. This allows us time to discuss your plans, and answer any questions you may have. It also provides us with the opportunity to explain some of the specific details about our practice and fully ensure that you understand midwifery care and your role. You are not obliged to choose our services after this visit and may take your time in determining whether midwifery care is right for you. During the next few visits, we will do a general health history, physical exam, and obtain needed lab assessments such as blood values. Most appointments are 30-45 minutes in length. This allows us ample time to discuss any ongoing concerns you may have as well as conduct the clinical provisions such as blood pressure, weight gain, nutritional status, fetal growth and fetal heart rate. If you have seen a family physician or another midwife for part of your prenatal care it is very important that we receive copies of your health records.

Our midwives maintain regular office hours during their clinic days and each full time midwife conducts 1-2 clinics per week. The remainder of the midwife's time is taken up conducting births, and with pre and postpartum home visits. It is your right under Ontario law to take time off from work to attend prenatal appointments.

Midwives provide total care to women who experience healthy, normal pregnancies. If you develop obstetric problems or have a medical condition, you and your midwife will determine the appropriate source for ongoing care and consultations. The standards set out by the College of Midwives of Ontario include specific conditions of mother and infant for which midwives much seek a medical referral. The written list of these conditions is included in your initial package (Midwifery Scope of Practice).

## **Labour and Birth**

We attend births in a variety of settings. Currently our midwives have privileges at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital (JBMH). We recommend that you register for a tour at JBMH to become familiar with the facility. If you are planning a home birth a list of supplies that you need will be provided. In the last month of your pregnancy we will visit you in your home. This gives us the opportunity to make specific suggestions regarding where you might be most comfortable to labour and/or birth. We also provide care to women wishing to experience water birth. More specific information regarding choice of birthplace can be discussed at your prenatal visits.

In our practice we work within a full scope of practice, meaning that as midwives when required we can manage epidurals and inductions of labour. We have good working relationships with the obstetric physicians and nursing staff in our community. When medically necessary we transfer your care to an obstetrician and can provide supportive care. When consulting we work as a collegial team.

During labour, the midwife will monitor labour contractions, check the dilation of the cervix, blood pressure and the fetal heart rate, assist with breathing techniques and positioning, deliver the baby and placenta, suture when necessary, examine the newborn infant, and check all aspects of your condition after the birth. One midwife is with you during active labour and a second midwife will be called as the labour advances. Midwives provide skilled support during labour and make suggestions for pain relief. However, we cannot replace the important support provided by your partner, close friends or other family members.

### **Postnatal Care**

After the birth, whether in hospital or at home, we will monitor the condition of both you and your baby for the first hours. If you give birth in hospital and all is well you may choose to go home within 3-4 hours or stay in the hospital. The arrangements are flexible and will be organized to meet your needs. We will visit you during the postpartum period to check on you and your baby, answer questions, and assist with infant feeding and baby care. Usually these visits take place on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> day. Thereafter, clinic visits will be arranged as needed. The final visit, most commonly around 6 weeks postpartum, includes a complete physical assessment. A final letter summarizing your pregnancy, birth and postpartum period will be sent to your family doctor at the end of care.

### **Parent's Roles and Responsibilities**

We believe that you and your family are active participants in your care and we expect that you will be responsible for you and your baby's health. You should eat a balanced diet, participate in prenatal care and get adequate rest and exercise. We believe that as parents you should acquire knowledge about pregnancy, birth and child care. We are available to answer questions, but cannot be the only source of your learning about the many important aspects of childbearing. You are welcome to borrow books, articles, videos and pamphlets from our lending library. We also welcome contributions of resources that you find particularly useful. We encourage you to bring your questions or concerns to your visits; making a written list is often helpful. In order for us to be effective caregivers, it is important that you keep us informed of problems or situations that may affect your care.

Giving birth with midwives, whether at home or in hospital, means accepting your responsibility as an ongoing decision maker during your care. We can provide you with information about the risks and benefits of procedures and possible complications that may arise, as well as our ability to manage them. We encourage you to have a full and complete discussion with us about these issues.

## **Shared Care**

We have organized ourselves to work in smaller groups of 2 or 3 midwives. Legislation requires two midwives to be present at every birth, therefore, during your pregnancy we alternate your visits between your primary and back-up midwives.

The individual midwives bring many years of experience to the practice. We share a respect for childbearing women and the variety of meanings that childbirth has for families. Your midwives will be pleased to discuss their individual education and background with you.

## **Obtaining Assistance**

Midwives are available by pager at all times for **urgent** problems and for labour and birth. All of the midwives and our students use a common answering service that is staffed 24 hours a day.

If your question is non-urgent or concerns a clinic appointment please call the office during business hours.

## **Student Involvement In Your Care**

We are a teaching practice affiliated with the Midwifery Education Programmes of McMaster, Laurentian, and Ryerson Universities. Students are present throughout the year and participate in all aspects of client care. Students at the second and third year level conduct births as well as provide prenatal and postnatal care. We are committed to ensuring that the quality of care we provide is improved and not diminished by the presence of students. We encourage clients to be teachers to our students by giving them and us feedback at all times.

## **Client Records and Confidentiality**

You are free to review your midwifery records at any time. If you go out of town we will supply a copy of your records for you to carry. We will ask you to carry a copy of your records during the last month of pregnancy to ensure that you will have your records when in labour. At your final postpartum visit you may request a copy of your records to keep. We will retain the originals in our files. Your records are kept in a locked area and are only accessible to members of the practice. We respect each client's right to complete confidentiality.

## **Philosophy**

Midwifery is based on you as the primary decision maker. We provide information so that you can make informed choices. We believe in continuity of care and knowing your care provider. We support choice of birth place, either home or hospital and believe in appropriate use of technology.

## **Your Decision**

We hope that this information has helped you to understand our care and to think of additional questions you may have. We urge you to consider this information carefully before making your final decision about choosing midwifery care.