

IS NORMAL BIRTH
POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

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IN HOSPITAL?

Not often

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- For these reasons:
- Hospitals are dominated by medical staff
- Midwives have to follow medical protocols
- The room is designed for interventions
- The woman is in a strange environment
- Few hospitals have birth pools

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- For the following reasons:
- The staff's response to pain is painkillers
- All hospitals have clocks
- The woman is left alone
- Too many hospitals do not allow companions

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- What is normal birth?
- A normal birth is a birth where the mother goes into labour spontaneously, the contractions become stronger, and the time between the contractions becomes shorter, until the mother pushes the baby out under her own efforts, and sometime later the placenta is expelled.

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- A study of normal birth in 5 regional hospitals revealed:
- Only 1 in 6 first time mothers had normal births
- Only 1 in 3 women expecting subsequent babies had normal births
- (Downe et al., 2001)

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- To have the best chance of a normal birth a woman needs:
- To feel safe
- To be accompanied by people she knows
- To have continuous support from a midwife
- To be free to move about
- To use a pool for pain relief
- To eat and drink as she wishes

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- Midwives in the UK are, in theory, trained to support and facilitate normal birth
- Midwives in obstetric units rarely see normal birth
- Free-standing midwifery units have high levels of normal births

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- What do the statistics say?
- Every hospital in the UK has to produce statistics
- They are available to the public
- But they do not necessarily give the information women want

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- Normal birth excludes the following:
- Artificial rupture of membranes
- Induction or acceleration of labour
- Continuous electronic fetal monitoring
- Epidural or other narcotics or barbiturates
- Episiotomy
- Caesarean section
- Forceps or ventouse
- Active management of the third stage

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- Current statistics only collect the following:
 - Induction of labour
 - Epidural or spinal
 - General anaesthetic
 - Forceps or ventouse
 - Caesarean section
 - Episiotomy

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- So, in the UK women having a 'normal birth' can still have the following interventions:
- Augmentation of labour
- Artificial rupture of membranes (to speed up a slow labour)
- Continuous electronic fetal monitoring
- Other narcotics or barbiturates
- Active management of the third stage

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- Research has shown that free-standing midwifery units, staffed entirely by midwives, enable those midwives to hone their skills and provide the kind of care that enables a woman to birth successfully and have far better outcomes than the standard obstetric unit.
- (Sanders D et al, 2000)

The changes that need to happen to enable women to have a normal birth:

- Remove the delivery beds
- Remove the clocks
- Enable midwives to work in teams and carry their own case loads
- Every maternity unit to have a Director of Midwifery
- More midwifery units, and provide support for home births

The changes that need to happen to enable women to have a normal birth:

- Introduce birthing pools in every delivery room
- Enable women to choose the midwife they want
- Ensure that midwives are trained in normal births and attend at least five during their training, preferably at home
- Enable obstetricians focus on women with problems, not low-risk women
- All junior doctors to observe at least five normal births, preferably home births

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- Normal birth is possible in hospital, but to achieve it there has to be significant changes in culture, attitudes, and support for practices that are developed to support normal physiological childbirth

IS NORMAL BIRTH POSSIBLE IN HOSPITAL?

- This requires leadership and mentoring from all maternity care providers who understand and can promote the value, meaning, importance, and short and long-term benefits of enabling a woman to give birth normally.