

Choosing Your Midwife



Finding the right midwife for you is an important job and a very personal decision. Make an informed choice based on the midwife's experience, references, and what feels like a good fit. Your midwife will be your trusted advisor, someone with whom you should feel comfortable discussing your physical and emotional well-being during your childbearing year.

To get you started, here are a few good questions to ask:

Tell me about your training. Where did you do your training and what did that training consist of? Did you train with one midwife, or did you have other preceptors?

What is your experience? You want to know how many years the midwife has been in practice, how many births she has attended as a primary caregiver, and what settings she has practiced in. If you are choosing a homebirth, ask if the midwife has been trained in out of hospital births and what kinds of challenging situations she has handled.

What does your care include? You want to know what type of prenatal care the midwife provides, what type of labor support and monitoring, and what after birth and well baby care she provides. Does she have a schedule of recommended visits? Do you have access to her at all times by pager if you need her outside of your regular visitation schedule? Is the midwife under community or state guidelines for minimum practice? Many midwives work with an informed choice agreement that explains the care and costs in detail. Ask for a copy.

What is your underlying philosophy? This is where the personalized touches show up. Ask what the midwife believes about birth and what she considers important in the care she offers.

What happens if we need to transport? Ask what circumstances require transport to the hospital. You want to know what situations she would consider transferring to medical care, what is her transport rate, what type of physician collaboration or medical care is available.

What types of unexpected surprises have you successfully handled at home? You want to hear about the midwife's experience with things that need to be handled quickly, like a stuck shoulder, or a baby needing extra help to get started.

What do you consider your gifts as a midwife? Every midwife has personal strengths and weaknesses. One might say her gift is her diverse experience working in the field far from back up, or one might say it is her knowledge about prenatal nutrition, or one might say it is her intuition. Again it is an opportunity to learn more about the style and personality of a particular midwife.

What do you do to stay current with your professional standards? Many midwives are required to complete continuing education credits, or stay current in CPR and neonatal resuscitation. Ask what her community, state, professional & personal standards are.

Can you tell a story about something amazing you have seen as a midwife? This is another opportunity to get a sense of the philosophy, style and flavor of a particular midwife. It will give you more of a sense of her as a person, her character, integrity, gifts, and philosophy.

What brought you to your work as a midwife? This is a great question to reveal the passion behind the midwife's work and will allow you to learn more about the midwife's philosophy concerning birth.

Ask for references. You should be able to get some past and current clients that are working with this midwife and interview them. Ask for some professional references too.

For more on how to interview a midwife, read:

Ina May's Guide to Childbirth by Ina May Gaskin

Gentle Birth Choices: A Guide to Making Informed Decisions by Barbara Harper

Homebirth by Sheila Kitzinger

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