

Having your baby at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre:
Information for parents and their families

Giving birth to your baby



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Created by: Fort McMurray Community Health Services
& Northern Lights Regional Health Centre

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Welcome

Congratulations! You have a baby on the way.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre (NLRHC) for your birth.

Having a baby can be an exciting experience, and we understand you may have questions and concerns before, during and after your birth.



This booklet will help you prepare for your birth here at Northern Lights. You will also learn more about our programs and services available to help you.

We encourage you and your family to review this booklet and keep it on-hand as a reference.

Our team works together to provide excellent, high-quality patient and family-centered care, and we welcome your questions and concerns any time.

Northern Lights Regional Health Centre

7 Hospital Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta
Switchboard: 780-791-6161

Health Link (811):

Available 24/7 for non-emergency related questions, health advice and information. Call at 811 to speak with a registered nurse.

Fort McMurray Community Health Centre

113 Thickwood Boulevard
Fort McMurray, Alberta
Phone: 780-791-6247
Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
Monday to Friday

Preparing for birth

Prenatal classes offer expectant parents and support people more information about pregnancy and parenting topics. Classes can help you feel more ready for labour, birth, and your first few weeks at home.

AHS Prenatal Classes

Fort McMurray Community Health Services (113 Thickwood Boulevard) offers free in-person and online prenatal classes.

A drop-in class is held at our office once a week.

An online prenatal class is offered monthly. [Visit our website](#) to register.

Classes cover more information about:

- Labour and delivery
- Breathing and relaxation techniques
- Immunization and infant safety
- Newborn and postpartum care
- Resources for you and your newborn
- Breastfeeding skills (such as latching techniques, hand expressions, positioning, and expected newborn behaviours)

Contact 780-791-6247 to learn more.

The Children's Centre

An AHS public health nurse provides free prenatal education Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at The Children's Centre (262 Gregoire Drive, Fort McMurray).

Classes are for all expectant mothers and their partners/support systems. A hot lunch is served from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

They specialize in expectant mothers who:

- Previously had a premature baby
- Are 20 years of age or younger
- Have weight concerns during pregnancy
- Have poor nutrition or eating habits
- Have another child under 12 months of age
- Need breastfeeding support or information
- Have limited income or support systems

Call The Children's Centre at 780-743-3309 to learn more.

Non-Stress Test (NST)

During your pregnancy (no earlier than 28 weeks), you may need to be scheduled for non-stress tests.

During this test, two elastic belts with sensors are placed across your belly to measure your baby's heart rate and reaction to movement/contractions. This test is safe, harmless and painless, and ensures your baby is healthy and getting enough oxygen.

Your doctor will arrange for someone to contact you to book this appointment.

When you come to Northern Lights for your appointment, you will first need to register at the maternity desk. Your partner, children and/or support person can join you for this.

At your NST appointment, you will:

- Give a urine (pee) sample
- Be asked about your current pregnancy, and past medical and pregnancy history
- Be booked for your next NST appointment (if needed)

Health concerns

The following conditions need to be assessed as soon as possible:

- Bleeding
- Regular contractions increasing in frequency
- Leaking of bodily fluid
- Less than six fetal movements in two hours
- High blood pressure
- Itchy on hands and feet worsening at night



If you experience these or other health concerns anytime during your pregnancy, come to the Northern Lights emergency department as soon as possible. In an emergency, dial 911.

When you get to Northern Lights, you may see a maternity nurse to make sure you and your baby are OK. The nurse may do a Non-Stress Test (depending on your pregnancy), and call an obstetrician.

What to bring to the hospital

It's time to have your baby at Northern Lights.

Even though you may only be at the hospital for a short time, you will need to bring supplies for you and your baby.

Packing lists will help make your stay with us as comfortable as possible.



General items to bring:

- A print-out of this resource
- Prenatal records from your healthcare provider (if you have them)
- Alberta healthcare card
- Health insurance information (if from out-of-province or country)
- Vending machine/payphone coins
- Watch/cell phone (and charger) for timing contractions
- Camera/video recorder and extra memory card
 - You are responsible for its safekeeping
 - Charge the battery before you come to the hospital
 - **Note:** Ask permission from doctors and staff before taking videos or pictures
- NST belt (if you were given one)

Optional items to bring:

- A focal point (i.e. stuffed animal or picture)
- Relaxing music
- Popsicles for the freezer and other snacks (remember to keep your food in a bag labeled with your name)
- Written birth plan

For mom:

- Toiletries, including lip balm
- Comfortable clothing, including front opening nightgown or pajamas (two to three pairs)
- Slippers
- Housecoat
- Underwear, including a nursing bra and at least three pairs of panties (panties are not provided by the hospital)
- Nursing pads
- Large sanitary pads (package of 36)
- Water bottle with straw
- Gum for mom (chewing gum helps you stay alert when holding/feeding your baby)



For your partner:

- Blanket and pillow (if staying overnight). A chair may be provided for sleeping
- Comfortable clothing suitable for sleeping
- Bathing suit for labour support in the shower
- Front-open shirt for skin to skin contact with the baby
- Snacks
- Money to purchase snacks and drinks
- Comfortable shoes

As a courtesy to other patients and staff, please do not use perfumed products or receive scented flowers during your stay. Some patients and care providers may have severe allergies to scented items.

Arriving at the hospital

Parking

When you arrive at Northern Lights, you will need to pay for parking. Pay machines are in the emergency department entrance and main lobby. You can also pay by installing using the AHS parking app on your phone (select zone 6496). You will need to enter your license plate number when paying. Parking can be paid hourly or for 24 hours.

Entrances

The doors by the emergency department are always open. The main doors are open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

Admitting and registration

If you are in active labour, enter through the hospital's emergency department doors and go to registration.

If you are not in active labour, go to the triage desk and you will be directed where to go next.

If you have a scheduled appointment (NST, induction, or c-section) go directly to admission. Our admission staff will direct you where to go next. Bring any papers your healthcare provider has given you for the nursing staff on the unit.

When you come to admitting, let the staff know you are pregnant and if you are in active labour. We do not want you waiting in line.

Go directly to Labour and Delivery if you are told by staff. If you are not sure where to go, our staff can help direct you.



Labour and Delivery

After you get to our Labour and Delivery unit, you will go to a private room where a nurse will check to see you and your baby.

After the nurse determines what is happening, you will either be:

- Admitted to a private room at the hospital for your labour and delivery
- Sent home with instructions on what to watch for and when to return for your birth



Being admitted

Once you are admitted to hospital in labour, you will be placed in a private labour and delivery room. These rooms have a private bathroom with a shower for the mother to use. Patients receive three meals a day. A small kitchen is also available on the unit for patients.

We will make every effort to ensure the family stays in a private room. On occasion, you may share a room with another new mom and baby.

Visiting during labour

You are encouraged to decide in advance who you want to visit you while you are in labour.

You can have a maximum of two people with you during labour and birth (including your partner/labour support person). It is helpful if they know about the labour process.

In the event you have a cesarean section, one person is allowed to be with the mother in the operating room if she is awake when the surgery is done.

All other friends and family can wait in the second floor waiting room. This is a shared waiting area for our pediatric, surgical, and maternity unit. Due to it being close to patient rooms, keep noise levels to a minimum. Children need to be supervised at all times.

To give you time to get to know your baby and begin breastfeeding, we suggest most family and friends wait at home until after the birth.

Comfort during labour

Our hospital uses a Safe Surgery Checklist to improve patient safety and ensure effective communication between surgery team members and surgical patients. When you are in the operating room, your surgical team reviews the checklist to make sure they are ready for your procedure. More information about this checklist can be found online at [MyHealth.Alberta](https://myhealth.alberta.ca).

We know many women may have questions about the labour process and how they can stay comfortable during it.

There are several options available to you. These options are discussed with you by your care team as you progress through labour. If you have any questions, speak with your care team.

Early in the labour process, we encourage you to try to relax and stay comfortable. This may include:

- Walking around
- Taking a shower
- Getting a massage from your partner/support person
- Changing your position often
- Listening to relaxing music
- Using your birthing ball
- Trying meditation, cultural coping, visualization and/or breathing techniques

It is encouraged to discuss the benefits and risks of your pain control options with your healthcare providers. All pain control options are optional. Choosing one pain control method does not prevent you from receiving a second method.

These options may include:

- Laughing gas (Nitrous Oxide or Entonox): This is available as required and frequently used at the end of labour before you begin pushing.



- Narcotic injection (pain drugs): This must be ordered by your healthcare provider. It is often given along with something to stop nausea that may be a side-effect of the narcotic.
- Epidural Analgesia: This is available for mothers once they are in active labour. It must be ordered by healthcare provider. It is given by an anesthesiologist. After this is given, ongoing care is provided by nursing staff once the epidural has started.
- Regional Anesthetic (Spinal): This is used for a c-section and is a one-time injection in your back. It is given by an anesthesiologist. This means you will be awake for the birth of your baby.

After your birth

After your baby is born, your baby will get a baby ID bracelet. This ID bracelet will match with the mom's hospital ID bracelet.

If you had a cesarean section, you will stay in the operating room/recovery room for at least two hours. When you are taken to the maternity unit, your care team will help you start skin-to-skin with your baby.



You and your baby will stay together in the same room until you go home.

If there is concern about the health of your baby at any time, our healthcare teams will need to care for it in our special nursery care area. You can be with your baby during this time.

Throughout your stay, our nursing staff will be available to help you with you and your baby's care.

If you want to leave your room with your newborn, your newborn must be in a wheeled bassinet provided by the unit. Newborns should not be carried in arms by parents or other support people outside of the room. All newborns must remain on the unit.

Skin-to-skin contact

After your birth, your care team will encourage you to immediately hold your baby uninterrupted with skin-to-skin contact for at least an hour (or longer as you want), or until completion of your first feed. This may be in the operating room and/or recovery room. If mom is unable to provide skin-to-skin for baby, the partner/support person is encouraged to do this.



If you have a cesarean section (c-section), often the partner/support person and baby will go to the nursery where skin-to-skin bonding can be done. During this time, the mother can rest and recover in the recovery room.

Skin-to-skin contact is important because it stabilizes your baby's heart rate, temperature, blood sugars and breathing. It also helps your baby feel safe and secure while minimizing stress. Starting skin-to-skin contact with your baby early after birth helps with breastfeeding and increases long-term breastfeeding success.

Your care team will encourage you to continue skin-to-skin practices with your baby throughout the rest of your hospital stay with us, as well as when you go home. If you have questions about skin-to-skin options, speak with your care team.

Breastfeeding

Uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact will encourage your baby to breastfeed within the first hour following delivery. Nursing staff will help you and your baby with breastfeeding as soon as your baby is ready to feed.

Staff are available to assist with latching the baby on the breast, and can provide you more information about breastfeeding, including recognizing feeding cues.

Your healthcare team is there to help you make informed feeding decisions. If you have concerns, are not sure if breastfeeding is right for you, and/or want to discuss other methods of feeding, ask your care team to ensure you have all the information you need to make a safe and informed decision.

Breastfeeding is a healthy, convenient and cost-effective way for you to feed your baby. The World Health Organization and the Canadian Pediatric Society recommends you exclusively breastfeed for the first six months and continue to breastfeed, along with introduction of complementary foods, for two years and beyond.

Learning to breastfeed takes time and practice. You may find breastfeeding easy or hard, especially in the first few weeks. Take it one day at a time. Breastfeeding can sometimes take up to four to six weeks for you to feel comfortable and confident with it. With time and practice, you and your baby will become more comfortable.

Encouragement and support from your partner, family, friends, and healthcare providers can help with your breastfeeding confidence. You can also get help by talking with other women who are breastfeeding, or by joining a breastfeeding support group.

Ask for help early and as often as you need it. Call Health Link at 811 or talk with your healthcare provider if you need breastfeeding help.

Your baby's health

Our healthcare team will provide a vitamin K dose, as well as screening and tests to your baby to ensure they are healthy. These are normal safe care practices for newborns.

- **Vitamin K:** Within six hours after birth, the Canadian Pediatric Society recommends your baby receives a dose of Vitamin K. This is typically provided with an injection into the muscle at the top of the baby's leg. Vitamin K helps prevent bleeding problems that may occur within the first few days of the baby's life.
- **Newborn Hearing Screen:** Without screening, it can be hard to tell if your baby has hearing loss. Your baby's hearing is important for many areas of child and brain development. Hearing loss can delay your child's speech, learning and social skills. This screening is quick, safe, and will not hurt your baby. The screening may be done during your hospital stay, or a healthcare provider will follow up after you go home.



- **Newborn Metabolic Screening:** Babies born in Alberta are tested for certain treatable conditions shortly after birth. Using a quick heel poke, drops of blood are collected on a special card and tested for 22 treatable conditions. Early treatment of these disorders can prevent health problems.
 - Your baby may cry during the collection of this blood sample. You are encouraged to breastfeed your baby and/or hold your baby skin-to-skin during this time.
 - If this test does not happen before you leave the hospital, our local Public Health team will contact you to arrange it. It is important to have this collected between 24 and 72 hours of your baby's birth.

Speak with your care team if you have any questions about vitamin K or the newborn screenings.

Length of stay in the hospital

After a vaginal birth, moms and babies stay in the hospital for 24 hours.

After a cesarean section moms and babies stay in the hospital for two days.

Patients may need to stay longer if there are any health concerns with mom and/or the baby.

Birth registration

All babies born in Alberta must be registered by the baby's parents.

You can register your baby's birth information for one year from the baby's birth date. You will not be able to have a birth certificate issued until registration is completed.

Hospital staff will give you information about how to register your baby's birth online by. You can complete the online registration at <http://obrs.alberta.ca>.



Visitation after birth

The baby's parent, grandparents, brothers and sisters can visit any time. Children are not allowed to stay overnight due to safety regulations.

It is up to you to decide who can hold your baby. All visitors must wash their hands before holding your baby. Visitors with a cold, flu or any illness should not visit.

Newborns should not be carried in arms by parents or other support people outside of the room. All newborns must remain on the unit.

If you do not want visitors, ask our staff to put a sign on your door.

Public Health Liaison

During your hospital stay, you may see a Public Health nurse. This nurse is on the maternity unit seven days a week in the mornings.

The nurse will provide you with information about Public Health services available to help you and your newborn. The nurse will also confirm your contact information.



Your role in your care

Throughout your hospital stay with us, your health and safety is our priority.

Patient safety starts with good communication. You and your family/friends play a role in your care.

There are things you can do to help us keep you safe:

- Ask questions until you feel comfortable. It is important you understand the care you receive.
- Listen to what your care provider is telling you. If you do not understand, tell them and ask more questions.
- Tell your care provider if you have any . Sharing important information can help us provide better care for you.
- Interpretation services are available. Ask our staff if you require help.



Your medications

To ensure your safety, it is important your care team knows the medications you are taking. This includes ointments, patches, creams, drops and over-the-counter medications (i.e. cold medication, pain relievers etc).

We encourage you to bring a list of these medications with you to the hospital. The list should include the name of medication, strength or amount, how often you take it, and why you need to take it.

It is important you:

- Tell us about allergies or bad reactions to medications you may have.
- Not take your home medications while in our care unless it is approved by your care provider.
- Ask if you don't know why your care team gives you a medication(s). For your safety, expect staff to confirm your name prior to them giving you any medication(s).

Preventing falls

- Please ask for help if you need it to use the bathroom or to sit/stand up. If you are asked not to get up without help, please don't. Call us to help you.
- It is important you wear proper fitting footwear with non-skid soles that have closed toes and closed heels to help prevent falls.
- Make sure you can reach your call bell so you can call for help.

Hand Hygiene

There are simple things you and your family can do to reduce the spread of germs, including proper hand hygiene.

Proper hand hygiene – the use of alcohol-based sanitizers or soap and water – is one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of germs in our hospital.

Make sure you, your family and visitors clean their hands:

- Before and after touching the patient and/or any objects in the patient's room.
- Before eating.
- After coughing or sneezing.

Use alcohol-based hand rubs located around the hospital or clean your hands with soap and water. If you need help, please ask.

It is OK to remind your care providers to clean their hands before providing care to you.



Leaving the hospital

It's time for you and your baby to leave the hospital and go home. Before you leave, our healthcare team will give you an information package with community resource information.

Ensure you have your car seat ready for your baby when you leave. Learn more about car seat safety at ahs.ca/carseats.

When you go home, it is important to get rest for the first few weeks after your baby's birth. It may be helpful to have family or friends available to assist you during this time.

A day after you leave the hospital, a public health nurse from Fort McMurray Community Health Services will contact you to check in on you and your baby, and answer your questions. During our check-in, we may arrange a Healthy Beginnings visit for you at our Public Health office. In some circumstances, a nurse may visit you at your home.

If a Healthy Beginnings visit is arranged with us, a public health nurse will complete a newborn metabolic screening if it was not done at the hospital.

Community health programs

There are many free services offered by Fort McMurray Community Health Services to help you, your family and your baby after you go home from the hospital. We can help you with breastfeeding and infant feeding, tell you more about routine childhood immunizations, weigh your baby, and much more. We also offer free support groups, including:

Good Beginnings: A weekly group for parents/caregivers to learn about different newborn and infant information and topics (from birth to 14 months of age).

Moms Matter Postpartum Support Group: A postpartum support group if you're feeling sad, overwhelmed or anxious after your birth. This is a safe space where you can talk, and learn more about mental health and emotional well-being.

Postnatal Program at The Children's Centre: A postnatal group for mothers, parents, their support systems and their babies. The program is offered Thursdays at the Children's Centre (262 Gregoire Drive, Fort McMurray). Hot lunch is served from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Having your baby at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre Information for parents and their families

Contact us at 780-791-6247 to learn more about and how we can help you.

Baby-Friendly Initiative

Our Fort McMurray Community Health Centre is proud to be a Baby-Friendly designated facility. This distinction is recognized through the World Health Organization for our Public Health team's commitment in providing quality care to mothers and babies, and helping families make informed decisions about infant feeding.

Our commitment to you is to:

- Offer you evidence-based information about breastfeeding and other feeding options so you can make an informed decision about infant feeding.
- Support your infant feeding choice.
- Encourage exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and continued breastfeeding until two year of age and beyond.
- Ensure our staff have the skills and knowledge to help you and provide safe, quality care to you and your family.
- Help local community organizations and workplaces support a culture where breastfeeding is accepted.

More information about the Baby-Friendly Initiative can be found online at www.babyfriendlywb.ca



NLRHC hospital services

Food

Patients receive three meals a day.

The hospital cafeteria is located on the basement level. It is open to visitors and patients Monday to Friday. A variety of lunch specials, as well as snacks, drinks, and sandwiches are available.

When the cafeteria is closed, vending machines are located on the main floor next to the Ron Wolff Auditorium. A vending machine and water bottle filling station are also located on the basement level.

Gift Shop – A Bit of Sunshine Ltd.

The gift shop is open daily and located in the lobby of the hospital. Items are available to buy, including greeting cards, gift items, snacks, books, batteries and some toiletries.

Telephones/Cell Phones

You can use your cell phone within the building as a patient or visitor. You are unable to use your cell phone in the operating room.

If you are in a room with more than one patient, please be respectful of other patients in your room when you use your phone.

Television

TV services are available for rental and provided by Optik TV (TELUS). This can be purchased on the TV with a credit card.

Internet/Wi-Fi

Free internet Wi-Fi is available throughout the hospital. Connect using the network name “Healthspot”. There is no password required to connect.

Smoking

For health and safety reasons patients, staff, and visitors are not permitted to use tobacco or tobacco-like products on hospital property; this includes the outside grounds.

Contacts and resources

Northern Lights hospital

Switchboard: 780-791-6161

Labour and Delivery Unit: 780-791-6080

Non-Stress Test Clinic: 780-791-6002

Fort McMurray Public Health

Community Health Services: 780-791-6247

Other health services

Health Link: 811

Emergencies: 911

Your family doctor:

Your midwife:



Websites

Alberta Health Services: www.ahs.ca

Baby-Friendly Initiative Wood Buffalo:
www.babyfriendlywb.ca

Birth and Babies: www.birthandbabies.com

Health Canada: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada

MyHealth.Alberta: www.myhealth.alberta.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada:
www.canada.ca/en/public-health

Ready or Not Alberta: www.readyornotalberta.ca

World Health Organization: www.who.int