



1. What is a “free standing” birth center?

A free standing birth center is an outpatient facility that is often close to a hospital. Many hospitals call their labor and delivery wards “birth centers”, however, they are not the same. A free standing birth center allows women to move around in labor and does not use intervention that restrict a laboring mother to the bed. Women are allowed to birth in many positions, including standing, squatting, hands and knees, and on one side. Don't be fooled by a pretty room with nice wallpaper in a hospital setting. A birth center allows women to actively birth and results in better outcomes for both mother and baby. Birth centers hire their own staff who are specially trained to attend normal birth.

2. Does the Women's Health and Birth Center take insurance?

The WHBC takes many forms of insurance. There are many plans with different amounts of coverage. It is best to call your insurance company and check to see what your plan covers. Our in-house biller will also be glad to check your benefits. Many companies allow women to change types of policies to assure birth center coverage.

3. I have to apply for Medi-Cal. Do I need to wait until I get my card before I can start prenatal care?

There is an excellent program called “Presumptive Medi-Cal” that assumes you qualify for benefits based on your income. You can start your care by filling out the presumptive forms at your first appointment. This assures coverage for your first few months of prenatal care while you complete your Medi-Cal application. This care is free even if you are denied Medi-Cal. We would like to see our clients begin prenatal care early.

4. What is a Certified Nurse Midwife?

A certified nurse midwife is a specialist in normal birth. She is a registered nurse and has attended several years more of college to become a midwife. She can provide all of your prenatal care, and delivery. Our CNM's work closely with OB/GYN physicians who can help if your birth becomes complicated or your needs are outside of the scope of midwifery, such as a cesarean delivery or vacuum extraction.



5. Can I pick out the midwife I would like to deliver my baby?

The Certified Nurse Midwives work in a team practice at the Birth Center. They have on call days that they deliver babies, days they work in the clinic, and days off. We want to make sure you know all the midwives well before the delivery. Our appointments are much longer than typical OB appointments so you have time to get to know and become comfortable with the four midwives. Our midwives are committed to helping you have the safest and easiest birth possible in an environment that is sensitive to you and your baby.

6. Is the birth center open at night?

The office hours include some evenings and Saturdays. Clients can page the midwife on call directly for any emergencies or if they go into labor. The midwife will meet the laboring family at the birth center.

7. Can I see the Birth Center and meet some of the staff before deciding?

You can call and schedule a half hour consult free of charge. You will meet with a health educator and tour the center. If there is a baby born the day of your appointment we will need to reschedule the tour for another day.

8. Does the Birth Center allow water birth?

We have been doing water birth for 15 years at the Birth Center. Many women labor in our water tubs and some stay in the tub and birth in the water. We have found water birth to be quite comfortable for both mother and baby. Remember, the baby is in water and births through the water to mother's arms.

9. What if there is an emergency during the birth?

The Birth Center is prepared for complications and has the equipment and skill to handle emergencies. There is oxygen and suction equipment available. The midwives can start and intravenous infusion (IV) and give Pitocin to contract the uterus to stop bleeding. There is another nurse or midwife at your birth to help the midwife and to help care for you after the birth. The nurses and midwives all have been trained in infant resuscitation. An ambulance transfer is rare and most problems can be resolved without leaving the Birth Center. Sutter Hospital is only 8 minutes away. We may call and ambulance if needed. Most transfers are simply that the birth is taking very long and long and the mother needs help to delivery successfully. The Birth Center follows the standards set by the American Association of Birth Centers and is one of their featured centers. You can go to www.birthcenters.com for that information.



10. Do I need to have an OB/GYN or MD as well as midwife for my prenatal care of in case of an emergency?

The midwives can do all of your prenatal care and testing. You do not need a physician unless the pregnancy becomes complicated. The WHBC has its own team of back up OB's we can call in to co-manage a more complicated case. The OB can also be called in to help at a birth if needed. The midwife has the ability to take care of you at the hospital, consult with the OB specialist, and attend to the needs of your baby.

11. Can my partner be involved with the birth?

We welcome your partner to share the birth experience with you every step of the way. He/She can share in your prenatal appointments, classes, and during the birth itself. Many partners get in the birth tub with the laboring mother, help catch the baby, and cut the cord. The partner stays with you and the baby after the birth.

12. I am considering transferring my care to the Women's Health and Birth Center. What is the first step?

Call WHBC to check and see if your insurance will cover a CNM and birth center care. We can then make your appointment. When you come in we will have you sign a medical release to be faxed to your previous provider to have your medical records sent to us. If you are over 34 weeks pregnant, we would need the midwife to review your records before deciding to take you as a client.

13. Who does the newborn examination after the birth of the baby at the Center?

When your baby is born it goes right up onto your chest and stays there until after the first breastfeeding if at all possible. Any newborn procedures, exams, and testing are delayed until your baby has been welcomed, warmed, and fed in your arms. The CNM will then do the newborn exam there in your presence an hour or two after the birth.

14. What is the Cesarean rate for Birth Center clients?

For the last 15 years the cesarean rate has run between 5 and 8 % every year. The average cesarean rate in the United States is presently 31%.