

Home births as safe as hospital births: International study

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Eileen Hutton is professor emerita of obstetrics and gynecology at McMaster University and founding director of the McMaster Midwifery Research Centre. Credit: McMaster University

A large international study led by McMaster University shows that low risk pregnant women who intend to give birth at home have no increased

chance of the baby's perinatal or neonatal death compared to other low risk women who intend to give birth in a hospital.

The results have been published by The Lancet's *EClinicalMedicine* journal.

"More women in well-resourced countries are choosing [birth](#) at home, but concerns have persisted about their safety," said Eileen Hutton, professor emeritus of obstetrics and gynecology at McMaster, founding director of the McMaster Midwifery Research Centre and first author of the paper. "This research clearly demonstrates the risk is no different when the birth is intended to be at home or in hospital."

The study examined the safety of place of birth by reporting on the risk of death at the time of birth or within the first four weeks, and found no clinically important or statistically different risk between home and hospital groups.

The study, which is the first systematic review and meta-analysis to use a previously published, peer-reviewed protocol for the research, used data from 21 studies published since 1990 comparing home and hospital birth outcomes in Sweden, New Zealand, England, Netherlands, Japan, Australia, Canada and the U.S. Outcomes from approximately 500,000 intended home births were compared to similar numbers of births intended to occur in hospital in these eight countries.

"Our research provides much needed information to [policy makers](#), care providers and women and their families when planning for birth," said Hutton.

More information: *EClinicalMedicine* [DOI: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2019.07.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2019.07.005)

Provided by McMaster University

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