

Homebirth Essentials

You do not need to buy lots of expensive equipment for a homebirth. This is a practical list of things that are genuinely useful to have ready. Your own NHS homebirth team may provide some items or ask you to prepare others, so check their local list too.

The practical kit

■ Birth pool, if you want one Most people hire rather than buy. A hire kit will usually include the pool, liner, hose and other equipment.	■ Birth ball Useful for sitting, leaning and moving during labour. An inexpensive exercise or pregnancy ball is fine.
■ Check the tap adapter As soon as the pool arrives, make sure the supplied hose adapter actually fits the tap you plan to use.	■ TENS machine A small battery-powered pain-relief device with pads that stick to your back. It can be especially useful in early labour.
■ Towels - around 8 They do not need to be new. A mixture of bath towels and hand towels is useful for you, baby and the floor.	■ Large bin bags Useful for wet towels, laundry and general rubbish. Keep a few somewhere obvious.
■ Disposable absorbent bed pads Often sold as disposable incontinence or bed pads. Useful on the bed, sofa or floor and for protecting surfaces.	■ Small hospital / transfer bag Have a basic bag packed even when planning a homebirth, so it is ready if you choose or need to go into hospital.
■ Waterproof mattress protector A cheap one is absolutely fine. Put it on the bed before labour so you do not need to think about it later.	■ Maternity notes + birth preferences Keep them together somewhere easy for you, your partner and the midwives to find.

A little preparation makes a big difference

Make the room work for you	Think about privacy and lighting. If the room stays bright, removable blackout window film can be a simple inexpensive option. Leave enough clear space for the midwives to move around and, if using a pool, to reach it.
Create atmosphere safely	Low lighting, music and battery-operated candles can help the room feel calm. Avoid real candles or any naked flame when Entonox or oxygen cylinders are present.
Food you can eat easily	Have small, high-energy foods that can be offered a bite at a time: banana, frozen grapes, dates, toast fingers, yoghurt, honey, cereal bars or whatever you know you will actually eat. Keep water and a drink within easy reach too.

Useful links

These are here to make the less-obvious items easier to find. They are examples rather than a requirement to buy a particular brand. HBC supplier discounts can be added later as they are agreed.

Birth pool hire	Hiring is usually the simplest option and many hire packages include the liner, hose, tap adapters, thermometer and emptying pump. pool-hire link / discount code https://go.referralcandy.com/share/RXG2Z2T
TENS machine	TENS stands for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation. Pads on your back deliver small electrical pulses and the machine can be hired or bought. https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/transcutaneous-electrical-nerve-stimulation-tens/
Hire a labour TENS	Specialist birth suppliers offer labour-specific TENS machines if you would rather hire than buy. https://elletens.com/ / Code - 10MIRACLEBIRTH 10% discount
Disposable bed pads	Search for large disposable incontinence or bed pads. Around 60 x 90 cm is a useful size. There is no need to buy an expensive maternity-branded version. Link
Waterproof mattress protector	A basic waterproof protector is enough. This is simply about protecting the mattress, not buying specialist birth equipment. Link
Blackout window film	Useful if the room you plan to labour in is difficult to darken or feels exposed. link

Before labour starts

- Unpack the pool and read the instructions.
- Check the hose reaches from the tap to the pool and that the tap adapter fits.
- Put the waterproof protector on the mattress and keep clean bedding ready.
- Charge or check batteries in anything you may use, including TENS, speakers and battery candles.
- Put towels, pads, bin bags, notes and the transfer bag somewhere your birth partner can find without asking you.
- Ask your homebirth team what they will bring and whether they have any additional local requirements.

Safety note: Homebirth teams may bring Entonox (gas and air) and oxygen cylinders. Avoid smoking or naked flames near these cylinders and follow the instructions of your own homebirth team.