

Home births save money, are safe, study finds

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Having a baby at home can save thousands of dollars over a hospital birth and is just as safe for low-risk births, according to a new UBC study.

Researchers with UBC's School of Population and Public Health and the Child and Family Research Institute looked at all planned home births attended by registered midwives in B.C. between 2001 and 2004. They compared them to planned hospital births attended by registered

midwives or physicians in which the mothers met the criteria for home birth.

For the first 28 days postpartum, they found planned home births saved an average \$2,338 compared to a planned hospital birth with a midwife. Compared to a planned [hospital birth](#) with a physician, the savings were even greater: \$2,541.

"Cost savings are associated with the place of birth," explained lead author Patricia Janssen, professor in the School of Population and Public Health at UBC. "It just makes sense that if you have a home birth you're not paying hospital charges."

The study also compared health costs for babies during the first year of life. For infants born to mothers who had planned a [home birth](#) with a registered midwife, first-year health costs were \$810 less than those for babies born in hospital with a midwife, and \$1,146 less than those for physician-attended hospital births.

Janssen says the savings indicates positive health outcomes for planned home births with a registered midwife. "If there were 'hidden' health risks associated with planned home births, such as a brain injury diagnosed after the neonatal period, these risks would show up in costs to the [health](#) care system—and we are not seeing them," she noted.

These findings follow earlier research by Janssen that demonstrated that planned home births resulted in fewer interventions and similar rates of adverse newborn outcomes compared to planned hospital births among women who met the criteria for home births.

"Planned home births attended by regulated midwives save our healthcare system money," said Janssen. "We're trying to produce the kind of data that will inform decision-making both at the policy level

and at the individual level. We want women to make the best choice for themselves."

The study, Costs of Planned Home vs. Hospital Birth in British Columbia, is published in *PLOS ONE*.

More information: *PLOS ONE*, journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0133524

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