

INFORMATION SHEET

Choosing an Obstetrician

expert care for women

An obstetrician is a specialist doctor who has six years of basic medical training, followed by another six years of specialist training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Obstetricians are trained to manage normal birth, as well as complicated births requiring appropriate interventions such as instrumental birth and Caesarean Section.

Finding the right obstetrician to care for you during pregnancy, birth and postnatally is important.

You may take recommendations from friends and family, use our locator to find a specialist near you or choose a hospital and ask for their list of specialists with visiting rights. In Australia, private obstetricians work in both the public and private hospital systems.

No matter how you find the obstetrician who suits you and your partner, you can be assured Australia has extremely high standards in obstetric care.

Australian standards

Australian women have access to some of the best health care in the world; our standards of obstetric care during pregnancy, birth care and postnatally are exceptional.

In Australia there are approximately 250,000 new babies born each year. Thanks to modern obstetric care and world class health facilities, birth in Australia is amongst the safest in the world, both for mother and baby.

In 2000 it was estimated that more than half a million women died in pregnancy or during childbirth and 98% of these deaths occurred in the developing world.

This represents a striking health risk differential between richer and poorer nations. Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is the ratio of the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The MMR is used as a measure of the quality of a health care system.

Sierra Leone has the highest maternal death rate at 2,000, as compared to the 2002 Australian rate of only 11.

Even for women who cannot afford a doctor of their choice, we recommend they deliver in a hospital which has obstetric

services available on site. Australia has such good outcomes for women and babies because all women have access to a doctor through the public health system if it is medically required.

We do not recommend home births, or delivering at stand alone birth centres. Read our fact sheet to learn more: home birth and birth centres.

Midwifery support

Obstetricians are usually supported by midwives. Midwives are registered nurses who have undergone an additional three years training to specialise in maternity care. Midwives are trained to support women during normal birth.

Many obstetricians have midwives working within their private practice providing support with pregnancy and postnatal care. In both the private and public hospital system midwives also provide care during labour and notify the obstetrician when it is time to assist with the birth.