

HAVING A BABY IN CALGARY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. What is Perinatal Outreach Education?

Perinatal Outreach Education (POE) offers **free** pregnancy and childbirth classes in different languages. It is offered by Alberta Health Services. These classes are offered in Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi and in English for Aboriginal. The goal of these classes is for mothers to have healthy birth weight babies.

Classes are run by educators in their first language. The educators contact immigrant, refugee, or Aboriginal pregnant women and their families who live in east Calgary. They also give information and refer women to other services.

2. What are the classes about?

Women in classes will learn and practice about things like:

- warning signs of premature labour
- stages of labour
- coping with labour and delivery (moving, relaxing, and breathing)
- medical interventions and pain medications
- breastfeeding and newborn care
- newborn safety
- postpartum self-care (how to take care of yourself after the baby is born)

Each class is about 2 hours long, with 6 classes in total. Learning plans are also offered based on the client's needs. Clients also learn about very important information such as what kind of help they can get when they are going to have a baby in Calgary and when they need to go to hospital to have the baby.

Classes are held at many different places in the community such as hospital classrooms, community health centres, mosques, temples, community agencies, store classrooms, clients' homes, to fit the needs of the clients. If needed, clients will be given bus tickets to come to the class. Pregnant women can register when they are pregnant and start when they are ready. After attending these classes, clients will feel more comfortable and well prepared to have a baby in Calgary.



3. Do these educators encourage certain “best practices”?

During classes mothers will get advice on what are the best things they should do. Different cultural practices in some clients’ countries of origin are compared to each other. The following best practices from South Asian countries are good:

- *Using upright positions (like squatting) for having the baby.* It will be easier and faster to get the baby out.
- *After the baby is born: Mother needs to rest a lot and be with the baby for the first month.* This brings mother and baby closer (bonding) and gives more chances for mother to read baby’s cues. This helps to take better care of the baby.

There are also ways to do things in South Asian countries that are **not** good for mothers and babies. It can cause health problems for the mother and baby:

- *Giving honey or milk with sugar to the newborn baby.* Honey can cause botulism (very bad food poisoning) and make the baby very sick.
- *Not giving drinking water to mom after birth for many days.* This can cause mom to have too little water in her body (dehydration). This makes it harder for her body to make breast milk.

4. What resources are there for these pregnant women?

Many resources are given to clients. The resources are in different languages that are easy-to-read. They help mothers while they are pregnant and even after having the baby. Depending on community donations, clients may be given small gifts as well as access to social, nutritional, and health help by social workers, nutritionists, and public health nurses.

5. How can I get more information?

You can call the Perinatal Outreach Educators to get more information about services and to register for first language pregnancy and childbirth classes. If you call one of the numbers below and leave a message, with your name and number, someone will call you back at later time.

Spanish: call Wichita at 403-944-0219.

Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi: call Harprit at 403-944-0220.

Arabic: call Fatima at 403-944-0220.

Aboriginal: call Joyce at 403-944-0219.

To learn more, speak with your family doctor, or for 24-hour nurse advice and health information, call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

Sources: Perinatal Outreach Education, Alberta Health Services, May 2009

For earlier “Road to Healthy Living” series articles and health information in your own language, please visit
www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/diversity/multilingual_health_services.htm