

## TENS Machines

TENS stands for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation. These machines provide pain relief through electrodes which are placed on the skin of the birthing person's back, where a gentle electrical pulse is emitted. It has not been determined why this is effective for pain relief. It is speculated that it may help to block pain signals, or cause the birthing person's body to release endorphins (a feel-good hormone). These machines are available to midwives in the equipment room.

## Birth Slings

Navajo and other Indigenous nations have been using suspended slings for birthing for centuries. Each birth room is equipped with a birth sling and an arm from which it can hang. These slings can be used to support the birthing person and facilitate different positions for comfort during labour.

## Birth Stools

Birth Stools can be used to facilitate comfortable positions for the birthing person. The stools can be used on the ground or in the tub. Squatting can be a comfortable but tiring position, and the birth stool can help to maintain the position.

## Nitrous Oxide

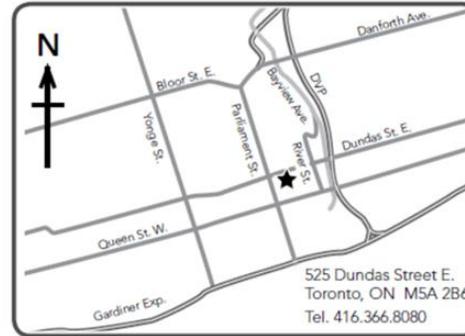
Nitrous oxide or "laughing gas" is available for use in the TBC. Nitrous oxide is inhaled through a mask and causes a calming and pain relieving effect. The effects work quickly, and wear off quickly after use. It can be used during contractions for pain relief, and is considered quite safe for use in labour.

## Local Anesthetic

Local anesthetic injections and gels are available for use in vaginal and perineal repairs after birth. The midwife will use one or both of these before suturing.

## Location

The Toronto Birth Centre is located near Dundas Street East and Parliament Street in downtown Toronto.



## Interested in a Tour?

### Contact Us!

Phone: (416) 366-8080 x 101



525 Dundas Street East  
Toronto, ON M5A 2B6  
(416) 366-8080

[www.torontobirthcentre.ca](http://www.torontobirthcentre.ca)

### To find a midwife, you can visit:

The Association of Ontario Midwives website

[www.ontariomidwives.ca](http://www.ontariomidwives.ca)

or call (416) 425-9974

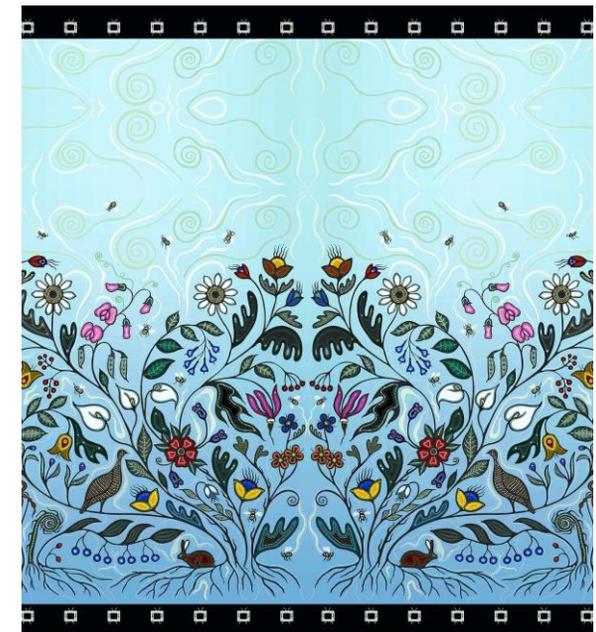
### To learn more about midwifery regulation:

College of Midwives of Ontario website

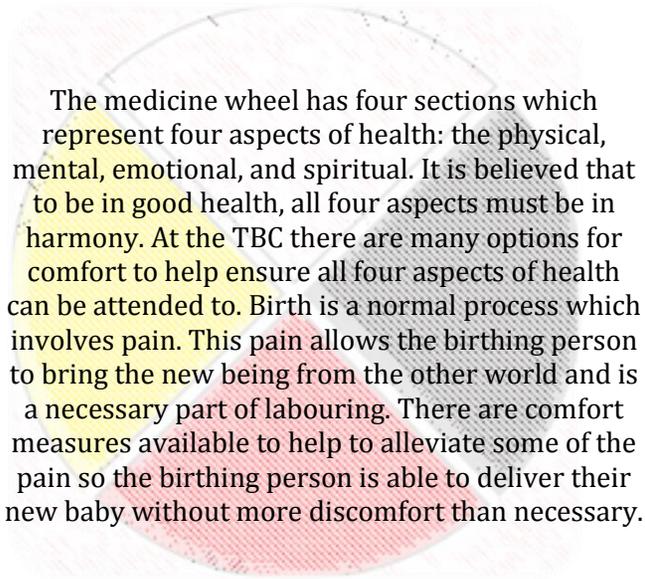
[www.cmo.on.ca](http://www.cmo.on.ca)

*This pamphlet was created by Paige Ricketts as a midwifery student project for the TBC.*

# Comfort Options for Labour at the Toronto Birth Centre



*TBC's vision is to create a space where pregnant people, families and communities can access culturally safe birthing care*



The medicine wheel has four sections which represent four aspects of health: the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It is believed that to be in good health, all four aspects must be in harmony. At the TBC there are many options for comfort to help ensure all four aspects of health can be attended to. Birth is a normal process which involves pain. This pain allows the birthing person to bring the new being from the other world and is a necessary part of labouring. There are comfort measures available to help to alleviate some of the pain so the birthing person is able to deliver their new baby without more discomfort than necessary.

**Support and Community**

For many Indigenous communities, support from family and community during the time of pregnancy and birth is very important. The TBC offers large rooms and family areas so that family and community members can attend birth. The TBC does not limit the number of people who can attend a birth. There is a full kitchen to prepare meals. Each room has a large bed for the birthing person, with enough room for a partner, friend, or other family members to join the birthing person. This allows for comforting touch, massage, and family inclusiveness. Children and adults are both welcome at births if the birthing person wishes.

**Art**

Each room has a wall mural by the Indigenous (Michif/Métis) artist Christi Belcourt. These murals may be used as an eye map to provide a focus during labour or to take the mind away from the pain the body is experiencing.

**Traditional Medicines**

People birthing at the TBC are welcome to bring their traditional medicines with them and use them as they would like. The Medicine Cabinet has four traditional medicines for use: sweet grass, sage, cedar, and tobacco. Smudges can be conducted and may help to focus the birthing person and make them feel at home. Cedar can be placed in the birth tubs, so the baby is born into one of its medicines.



**Song and Ceremony**

A birthing person may find comfort in songs or drumming. Drumming and singing can help to ground a birthing person to the Earth, their family and their community. Repetition in music can be comforting and used for healing. Handmade drums and rattles are available in the Medicine Cabinet.

**Music**

Each room is equipped with a Bluetooth speaker, so the birthing person may listen to comforting music during their labour. Music may help to distract or ground the birthing person.

**Rebozos**

Rebozos are long woven cloth strips that originate from Central American Indigenous people. Rebozos can be used in many ways to support positioning and provide comfort in labour.

**Birth Ball**

A birth ball is available in each birth room. The ball can be used to sit on, to rock, or to support a person's legs or body. These balls help to promote comfort through positioning. There are also "peanut" shaped balls available in the equipment room.

**Sterile Water Injections**

Sterile water injections are 4 small injections of sterile water into the skin of the lower back. These help to block pain pathways and relieve labour pain, especially in the case of 'back labour'. These are administered by the midwife who has been trained to do so. Ask your midwife about sterile water injections.

**Hydrotherapy**

Some Indigenous cultures see pregnant people as water carriers. Being in and around water during birth can be comforting. Birthing persons can immerse themselves in water in the large tubs or showers available in each room, and may choose to deliver their babies into the water in the tub.



