Birth Settings (Oregon)

Oregon is one of the few states in the U.S. that allows any type of births. The following are ways women can give birth in Oregon.

Giving Birth in the Hospital

Family Practice Doctor (MDs):  These are Medical Doctors who hold a Doctorate degree in medicine.  A family doctor will have training in typical deliveries and may be very knowledgeable about birth, especially if they have been in practice for 10 years or more. A MD can prescribe IV medications but may or may not be licensed to perform cesarean sections.

Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OBGYNs):  These are Medical Doctors who hold a Doctorate degree in medicine, and have additional surgical expertise in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. An OBGYN will be knowledgeable in the diseases surrounding pregnancy and childbirth and will have a set standard of care regarding each issue. An OB/GYN can prescribe IV medication and perform cesarean sections.

Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs):  A CNM is a midwife who holds a Master’s Degree in Nurse Midwifery. Care although most do so in a hospital setting and can prescribe IV drugs such as Pitocin.  CNMS almost always work with OB/GYNs and most have hospital privileges. CNMs can prescribe IV medications but cannot perform cesarean sections.

Giving Birth outside the Hospital

Direct Entry Midwives (DEMs): There are no legal requirements in Oregon for the practice of direct entry midwifery, although a DEM may choose to become licensed through the state at this time. DEMs attend home and birth center births. Most DEMs are trained to handle most normal birth and pregnancy situations. DEMs do not give IV medication or perform cesarean sections.

Naturopaths (NDs):  Naturopaths are Naturopathic Physician who holds a Doctorate degree of Naturopathic Medicine and are allowed to attend births in Oregon if they have obtained a certificate of Special Competency In Natural Childbirth. Naturopaths typically are in private practice unaffiliated with a hospital and may have a birthing suite in their offices.  Generally speaking, NDs do not give IV medication and cannot perform surgery.

Unassisted Birth (UB): This is a birth where the mother chooses to have no medically trained attendants with her, but she may ask for her friends and family to assist her. Unassisted births are legal in Oregon and a woman is not required to have a trained attendant. There are generally no medical procedures (other than self-procedures) performed in an unassisted birth, but women who choose this option sometimes purchase a “birth kit” with medical supplies from the internet.