

WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION

Midwifery and Midwife-led Care

What is a midwife?

Most midwives in the United States are health care providers who offer a broad range of services to women of all ages and stages of life. With their advanced education and emphasis on implementing evidence-based practice, midwives are dedicated to partnering with women to identify each woman's unique needs and health care values in order to provide the best care possible.

What services and resources do midwives provide?

Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) provide a broad range of women's health services starting with a woman's first period and through menopause, plus all the important health events in between, such as:

- General health care services
- Annual gynecologic exams
- Family planning needs
- Treatment of sexually transmitted infections
- Care during teenage years
- Care for pregnancy, labor, and birth
- Menopause care

CNMs and CMs are independent health care providers who work with other members of the health care team, such as physicians and nurses, to provide high-quality care. They work in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, medical offices, clinics, birth centers, and homes.

What different types of midwives are there?

It is important to understand the different types of midwives who work to provide health services to women. Different types of midwives include:

- **Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM®):** CNMs are registered nurses with graduate education in midwifery. They have graduated from a nurse-midwifery education program accredited by the Accreditation Commission

for Midwifery Education (ACME). This education includes a university degree as well as hands-on clinical training by practicing CNMs. They also have passed the national certification exam of the American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB). CNMs provide general women's health care throughout their lives, including:

- General check-ups and physical exams;
- Pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care;
- Well woman gynecologic care; and
- Treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

CNMs are able to prescribe a full range of medications and treatments, including pain control medications. CNMs work in many different settings, such as hospitals, health centers, private practices, birth centers, and homes. Most midwives in the United States are CNMs.

- **Certified Midwife (CM®):** CMs are midwives with a bachelor's degree in a field other than nursing who hold a graduate-level degree from a midwifery education program accredited by ACME. The midwifery education program for CMs includes health-related skills and training in addition to the same midwifery education CNMs receive. Like CNMs, they have passed the national certification exam of the AMCB. CMs provide the same services as CNMs, practice in the same settings, and receive the same preparation as CNMs to safely prescribe a full range of medications and treatments.
- **Certified Professional Midwife (CPM):** CPMs prepare for a national certification exam administered by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) in different ways. There are 2 primary pathways for CPM education with differing requirements: apprenticeship training alone or an accredited formal education program. The health care services provided by CPMs are not as broad as those of CNMs and CMs. CPMs provide pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care for women outside of the hospital—often in birth centers and homes. CPMs are not able to prescribe medications.

- **Other Midwives:** Other midwives who are not certified by AMCB or NARM may be practicing in some states. These midwives may or may not have formal education and have not passed a national certification exam and they may not be licensed. Their services are usually focused on pregnancy and birth, and they are unable to prescribe medications.

Is midwifery care safe?

Midwives approach women's health care based on evidence and clinical expertise, while also considering a woman's own health care values. The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) has joined with other national health care organizations to develop and endorse principles for client safety in childbirth based on scientific knowledge, coordination of care between a woman's health care team, active involvement of clients and their families, and a commitment to improving the quality of care. Together, these principles help promote the highest standards for quality and safety in maternity care in the United States.

Will my midwife provide the pain relief options and medical procedures I want to have during labor?

Most midwives favor an approach to pregnancy, labor, and birth that is based on normal, bodily processes rather than on the use of medical procedures. Your midwife will partner with you on making decisions around pain relief techniques, such as use of epidural during labor, and make sure that you receive the type of pain relief you need and want. Whether you wish to use methods such as relaxation techniques or movement during labor or try IV, epidural, or other medications, your midwife will work with you to help meet your desired approach to birth. At the same time, your midwife will provide you with information and resources about the different options and choices available if any changes to your birth plan become necessary or if you change your mind. To learn more about normal, healthy childbirth, visit <http://ourmomentoftruth.midwife.org/handouts-for-women> and click on Normal, Healthy Childbirth for Women & Families.

Will my insurance cover the care of a midwife?

The majority of states require private insurance companies to pay for services provided by certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), and Medicaid coverage for CNMs is required in all states. In states that do not require private insurance coverage, many insurance plans still cover CNM services. Before choosing any new care provider, check to be sure that your insurance will cover the service and make sure the provider accepts your specific insurance plan.

Where can I go to learn more about midwifery?

To learn more, visit ourmomentoftruth.com. The Web site offers several resources for getting involved and spreading the word about the care and services midwives provide.

Women's Health Perceptions

The questions in the following section are based on a national survey conducted in 2012 in support of Our Moment of Truth™ of more than 1000 women from across the United States about their perceptions of the health care they receive.

DID YOU KNOW that according to a 2012 survey, *Women's Health Care Experiences & Perceptions*, a large majority of women (85.4%) said they are somewhat to very satisfied with their care, yet **most say they are not getting many of the services they want?**

DID YOU KNOW that women expect to receive annual pap tests and breast exams (89%) from their women's health care provider, but **most are looking for additional services**, including:

- Family planning advice after a previous birth (65%)
- Prescription of a range of pain management options during childbirth (57%)
- Choice of birth setting (50%)

DID YOU KNOW that according to the survey, *Women's Health Care Experiences & Perceptions*, **women are NOT having conversations with their health providers about a number of important women's health practices?** Specifically, most women who have given birth or are pregnant say their care providers aren't talking with them about:

- How to care for their health during pregnancy (80%)
- Breastfeeding: Approximately 3 out of 4 women did not talk with a care provider about breastfeeding during pregnancy
- Birth control and family planning: Although most women (65%) would like guidance and information on birth control and family planning options after a previous birth, 87% of women did not discuss this with their provider
- Also, only about half of women who have given birth say their provider spent a great deal of time with them throughout labor and birth

DID YOU KNOW that even though 1 in 3 babies in the United States are born by cesarean section, **more than 80% of women who have given birth or are pregnant have not discussed the surgery with their provider during pregnancy?** Additionally, while labor induction rates in the United States are on the rise, **3 out of 4 women did not talk with a care provider about induction during their pregnancy.**

DID YOU KNOW that **even with the inherent risks that major surgery brings, nearly 60% of women would have a cesarean section that was not medically necessary.**

In fact in 2009, cesarean birth rates reached an all-time high of nearly 33% for women in the United States. While induced labor without medical reason can lead to complications during and after birth for mother and baby, 9 out of 10 women wouldn't mind a labor induction even if there is no medical reason.

Learn More About *Our Moment of Truth™*

What is Our Moment of Truth™: A New Understanding of Midwifery Care?

Our Moment of Truth™ is a national awareness initiative that aims to improve women's health and maternity care in the United States. *Our Moment of Truth™* challenges every woman to find the care she deserves by:

- Encouraging women to become active participants in their health care and learn more about the full range of options available for their women's health care needs.
- Prompting women to find a provider who can meet their unique health care preferences instead of settling on the type of care they are used to receiving.
- Re-introducing midwifery care as an important option that should be widely considered and can be the norm for US women.

Why is Our Moment of Truth™ essential?

A 2012 survey of more than 1000 American women—*Women's Health Care Experiences & Perceptions*—reinforces that women have more health care options available to them than they realize. The survey highlighted that:

- There is a major gap between what women say they want out of their care during pregnancy and childbirth and what they are receiving.
- Women are settling for health care they don't view as ideal. They say they are satisfied even though they aren't getting the type of care and information they desire from their providers, especially when it comes to pregnancy and childbirth.
- Women are not well-informed of the impact that some of the most commonly used medical procedures can have on their health and the health of their baby.

How will Our Moment of Truth™ make a difference in women's lives?

Our Moment of Truth™ enables women to become advocates for their own health care by:

- Telling the truth about midwifery care, and the services that many midwives offer beyond maternity care. Midwives can help close the gap for women who are looking for more out of their care.
- Sharing tools women need to find the health care provider who can meet their unique needs.
- Offering women the resources to ask the right questions of their chosen provider, ensuring important dialogue takes place and care decisions are made in partnership.

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