

YOU ASKED, WE'RE ANSWERING

What is midwifery care, really?

Not a scene from a period drama, and not "alternative." Midwifery is one of the most carefully studied ways of caring for women and families in the world.



Today's midwives are licensed clinicians who practice in hospitals, clinics, birth centers, and homes across the country.

A different starting assumption

Midwifery begins from the understanding that pregnancy and birth are, for most women most of the time, healthy processes that a well-supported body knows how to do.

Watching closely, too

Midwives screen carefully, watch for what could go wrong, and step in or bring in physician partners when something needs attention.

Part of the care team

Midwives, OB-GYNs, and family physicians each bring different strengths. Many families benefit from more than one.

WHO ARE MIDWIVES?

Three paths to midwifery

All three are trained, nationally certified midwives. Their education and where they can practice differ, and each state sets its own rules.



CNM

Certified Nurse-Midwife

TRAINING

Registered nurse plus a graduate degree in midwifery

CERTIFIED BY

American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)

WHERE

Hospitals, clinics, birth centers, and homes

CARE

Pregnancy and birth, plus well-woman and primary care across life. Can prescribe.

CM

Certified Midwife

TRAINING

Graduate degree in midwifery, without a nursing background

CERTIFIED BY

American Midwifery Certification Board (AMCB)

WHERE

Similar settings to CNMs, in the states that authorize CMs

CARE

Same national certification exam and scope as CNMs, where state law allows

CPM

Certified Professional Midwife

TRAINING

Accredited midwifery program or supervised apprenticeship

CERTIFIED BY

North American Registry of Midwives (NARM)

WHERE

Mainly homes and birth centers

CARE

Focused on pregnancy, birth, and postpartum for healthy pregnancies

In Missouri clinics and birth centers, you'll most often meet certified nurse-midwives. They can order labs and ultrasounds, prescribe, and care for you across your whole reproductive life.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Care built around relationship

In practice, midwifery care looks like time, and like being talked with, not talked at.



Time to talk

Visits long enough to ask your questions and talk things through.

All of your health

Your sleep, food, stress, family, and fears, not just your lab values.

Choices you understand

Options and evidence explained, so decisions are made together.

Nothing without asking

Consent before every exam and procedure.

Your culture & story

Care that fits your family and your values.

Learning your body

Leaving each visit knowing more than when you came in.

Care across your life (CNMs and CMs)

Well-woman visits

Birth control

Pre-pregnancy

Pregnancy & birth

Postpartum

And beyond

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Studied around the world

A 2024 Cochrane review combined 17 randomized trials with 18,533 women. It compared seeing a known midwife or small midwife team with other models of care.



66% → 70%

VAGINAL BIRTH

More women gave birth vaginally **without surgery or instruments**

16% → 15%

CESAREAN

Slightly fewer **cesarean births**

14% → 13%

FORCEPS / VACUUM

Slightly fewer **instrument-assisted births**

23% → 19%

EPISIOTOMY

May mean fewer **episiotomies** (lower-certainty evidence)

Experience: women generally described more positive experiences of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. **Safety:** other outcomes, like preterm birth, were similar between models.

In U.S. Medicaid: a federal advisory commission (MACPAC) reported lower rates of preterm birth (5.1% vs. 11.7%) and low birthweight (4.5% vs. 10.2%) for births attended by nurse-midwives than by physicians. Part of this reflects who midwives care for, since physicians also care for higher-risk pregnancies.

Sandall J, et al. Midwife continuity of care models versus other models of care for childbearing women. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2024;4:CD004667. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD004667.pub6. Trials were in Australia, Canada, China, Ireland, and the UK. MACPAC issue brief (2023), as reported by HealthPayerIntelligence.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

What families often describe

When people talk about midwifery care, the same themes come up again and again.



I wasn't rushed.

She knew my name and my story.

I understood every choice I made.

Nobody did anything to me without asking.

Midwifery care is intentional care: research-informed, relationship-centered, and built on the belief that you are the expert on your own body.

Wondering if midwifery care is right for you?
Let's talk at our table.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"A birth center is just a small hospital."

fold here

MYTH. It's a home-like place for healthy pregnancies, led by midwives, with a plan to move to a hospital if needed.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"Birth centers work with nearby hospitals and doctors."

fold here

FACT. They have transfer plans and physician partners for when more care is needed.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"You can't get any pain relief at a birth center."

fold here

MYTH. There are no epidurals, but there's water, movement, massage, and support. Some centers offer more options.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"Birth centers are for healthy, lower-risk pregnancies."

fold here

FACT. Your midwife checks throughout pregnancy that a birth center is still a safe fit.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"Medicaid can cover birth center care."

fold here

FACT. Federal law requires state Medicaid programs to cover care at licensed freestanding birth centers.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"After birth, you stay for several days."

fold here

MYTH. Most families go home within about a day, with follow-up visits after.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"Midwives only deliver babies."

fold here

MYTH. Nurse-midwives also do GYN care, birth control, and care through all of life.

BIRTH CENTER: MYTH OR FACT?

"There's only one kind of midwife."

fold here

MYTH. There are three main paths: CNM, CM, and CPM. Each has its own training and certification.

ASK A MIDWIFE

What's your biggest question?

Write it on a sticky note and put it on the board. We'll answer as many as we can today, and in our posts and classes.

About midwives

Who are they? What do they do?

About birth centers

Is it safe? What's it like?

Pregnancy & birth

Anything on your mind

After baby

Feeding, recovery, sleep, feelings

Ask a question → get a treat & an extra raffle entry!