

Mother-Friendly Childbirth – Highlights of the Evidence

Access to Midwifery Care and Out-of-Hospital Birth

The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother Friendly Care (Journal of Perinatal Education, Vol. 16, Supplement 1, Winter 2007), published in Lamaze International's peer-reviewed professional journal, is the result of an extensive review of the research behind today's maternity care practices by the **Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS) Expert Work Group**. Citizens for Midwifery and BirthNetwork National have developed this summary of the evidence regarding midwifery and out-of-hospital birth found in **Step 1** and the **Appendix** of *The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother Friendly Care*.

A mother-friendly hospital, birth center, or home birth service offers all birthing mothers unrestricted access to birth companions of her choice, professional labor support, professional midwifery care.

Use of midwives was associated with:

- Increased length of prenatal visits, more education and counseling during prenatal care, and fewer hospital admissions.
- Less need for analgesia and/or epidural anesthesia and increased use of alternative pain relief methods, as well as more freedom of movement in labor and intake of food and drink.
- Fewer inductions and augmentations of labor and decreased use of amniotomy (membrane rupture), IVs, electronic fetal monitoring.
- Lower or equivalent incidence of maternal infection and shoulder dystocia; fewer or equivalent postpartum hemorrhages; fewer injuries of the perineum (tissue between vagina and anus) as shown by fewer episiotomies, fewer rectal tears, and more intact perineums. Fewer or equivalent instrumental births with forceps for vacuum extraction.
- Fewer cesareans overall, including fewer emergency cesareans for fetal distress or for inadequate progress in labor, and more vaginal births after cesareans (VBACs).
- Lower incidence of fetal distress or infants requiring resuscitation after birth. Fewer infants born preterm, low birthweight or with complications such as birth injury; fewer or equivalent infants admitted to intensive care; fewer infants needing sepsis workups, and fewer or equivalent number of perinatal deaths (deaths around the time of birth).
- More infants remaining with their mothers during hospital stay and exclusively breastfeeding at 2-4 months after birth.
- Increased maternal satisfaction and reduced costs.

APPENDIX: Birth can safely take place at home and in birthing centers.

Summarizes evidence regarding both *home birth* (low risk women planning to give birth at home with a qualified provider) and birth in *freestanding birth centers* (independent facilities that provide care to low risk women and their newborns). Reviewers found:

- Lower rates of labor induction and augmentation, less use of amniotomy, IV fluids, continuous electronic fetal monitoring.
- Less need for analgesia or epidural or spinal anesthesia, more freedom of movement in labor (*home birth*).
- More effective pain management in labor; more freedom of movement and intake of food and liquid in labor (*freestanding birth centers*).
- Fewer cesarean surgeries, vacuum extractions, forceps deliveries and episiotomies.
- Similar outcomes compared with babies of low-risk women planning hospital birth, including similar perinatal deaths rates.
- Among women having a home birth after a hospital birth, 85% said they preferred the home birth experience and, of those planning more children, 91% said they would plan a home birth.
- "Because of its inherently noninterventive and more intimate nature, out-of-hospital birth facilitates mother-friendly care."

To read the review in its entirety, including methodology, rationales for including and excluding studies, the evidence regarding each of the steps, discussion, commentary, and a complete listing of all of the members of the CIMS Expert Work Group, see *The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother Friendly Care* published by Lamaze International as a **Supplement to the Journal of Perinatal Education, Vol. 16, Supplement 1, Winter 2007**.

To get a free downloadable copy of *The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother-Friendly Care* in its entirety go to the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services at:

<http://www.motherfriendly.org>

or Lamaze International at:

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/lamaze/jpe/2007/00000016/a00101S1>

To order a limited edition print copy of *The Evidence Basis for the Ten Steps of Mother-Friendly Care* (\$15 per copy, plus shipping), or to place a bulk order, contact the Academy of Childbirth Educators at: 1-800-444-8223 or order online at:

<http://www.acbe.com/products.html>

The original **Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative (MFCI)** which includes the *Ten Steps of Mother-Friendly Care* is available for **free download** from the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS) at:

<http://www.motherfriendly.org>

For more information, call CIMS: 1-888-282-2467

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