Module 13
What You Can Do to Have a Safe and Satisfying Birth
Look for Caregivers who Provide Mother-Friendly Care

- Mother-Friendly care is the safest and most satisfying for mothers and families.
- The Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative created by the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS) outlines the safest care with the least interventions for mothers and babies.

What Is the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative?

- A Ten Step, evidence-based, consensus document developed by CIMS in 1996;
- Mother-, baby-, and family-friendly model of maternity care, focuses on prevention and wellness;
- Respects the normal (physiologic) process of birth, mother’s informed choice;
- Applies to births in a hospital, home, or birth center.
Mother-Friendly Care includes you in all maternity care decisions, respects your needs and respects your rights.
The Coalition for Improving Maternity Services has published a brochure for parents to help them find a Mother-Friendly caregiver. It’s called, Having a Baby? Ten Questions to Ask. You can find it in the resources section.
Mother-Friendly Care is recognized by the Bureau of Maternal-Child Health.
“...no woman should be subjected to unnecessary interventions and... every woman should be cared for in a system that respects her autonomy and upholds the principles of Empowerment, Do No Harm, and Responsibility and be given the choice of mother-friendly maternity services ...”

Video Address for CIMS Forum
March 1-2, 2013 at Kansas City, MO
Knowing how your body changes during pregnancy and how your own hormones prepare you for labor and birth will give you the confidence you need to work with the powerful forces of childbirth.

Photo: © Kristal Kirk/Dollar Photo Club
Most women learn about childbirth from watching TV or from seeking information on the internet.\(^1\)

Unfortunately, they may only see a skewed view of birth and miss out on learning many ways to help them cope with labor.

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Consider Taking a Childbirth Class

Take a class that:

- Empowers you;
- Helps you to discover your inner strengths;
- Prepares you realistically for birth;
- Includes your rights and responsibilities;
- Respects the normal process of birth.
Consider having a birth doula at your birth.
Consider Having a Doula at Your Birth

A birth doula is a person trained and experienced in childbirth who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the mother before, during and just after childbirth.
Evidence shows that doulas have the skills to help your labor progress.

With a doula mothers have lower cesarean rates, are less likely to need an instrumental delivery (vacuum or forceps) and less likely to need an epidural for pain relief.

With a doula mothers and babies are healthier and mothers are more likely to breastfeed and to be satisfied with their birth.

Consider a **midwife** as your primary care provider.
Consider a Midwife as Your Primary Care Provider

With the midwifery model of care mothers have:
- More prenatal education and counseling time;
- More freedom of movement in labor and birth;
- More access to food and drink in labor;
- Fewer labor interventions;
- More access to non-drug methods of pain relief.

Consider a Midwife as Your Primary Care Provider

With the midwifery model of care mothers have:

- Fewer complications of birth;
- Fewer cesareans;
- More VBACs;
- Higher breastfeeding rates;
- Excellent maternal and perinatal outcomes.

Sagady Leslie, M. & Storton, S. (2007). Coalition for Improving Maternity Services, Evidence-basis for the ten steps of mother-friendly care, Step 1. Offers all birthing mothers unrestricted access to birth companions, labor support, 
Journal of Perinatal Education 16(1) Supplement, 105-195.
With midwifery care mothers and babies have excellent outcomes.
A study in the journal *The Lancet* defined midwifery as “skilled, knowledgeable and compassionate care for childbearing women, newborn infants and families across the continuum throughout pre-pregnancy, birth, postpartum and the early weeks of life... respecting women’s individual circumstances, and views, and working in partnership with women to strengthen women’s own capabilities to care for themselves and their families.”

Physicians are Moving Towards the Midwifery Model of Care and Changing their View of Childbirth

From, “Birth is dangerous.”

To, “Birth is normal.”

Cesarean Photo- © Gilberto Santa Rosa, Flkr/Creative Commons  Mother and Newborn Photo- © Katie Molin/Dollar Photo Club
Six leading maternity care organizations have signed on to a different view of childbirth which reflects the midwifery model of care.

“Pregnancy and birth are physiologic processes that usually proceed normally.”

“Most births are normal and require minimal intervention.”

“Decisions about interventions should incorporate the woman’s personal values and preferences and should be made only after she has had enough information to make an informed choice, in partnership with her care team.”

Endorsed by ACOG, AAP, AAFP, ACNM, AWHONN, & SMFM

Develop Your Own Birth Guide
to Give to Your Caregivers

- Think about how you and your baby would like to be cared for during and after birth.
- Discuss your preferences and concerns during your prenatal visits and when your labor begins.
- Your caregivers should try to work with you and respect your choices while still providing safe care.
Key Points to Review

- Although many mothers look for information for pregnancy and childbirth on the internet, many of the websites do not help mothers to get woman-centered, evidence-based care.

- Parents should consider taking a childbirth class that includes a variety of options to help labor progress, a method of relaxation, options for non-drug methods of pain relief and women’s rights in childbirth.
Parents should look for supportive maternity care providers who take the time to discuss their concerns and to understand their needs.

Parents may want to find out more about doulas and midwifery care.
For any birth parents have decision-making responsibilities:

- Where will you give birth?
- Who will you choose as a medical caregiver?
- Would you and your partner be comfortable having a doula at your birth?
- Would you feel safer in a hospital, but are concerned about unnecessary routine interventions?
- If you are planning a low-tech birth, do you have an effective back-up system available?
- You will need answers to these and many more questions during your pregnancy.
Build **good communication** with your caregivers.
Build a Relationship of Mutual Respect

- Try to explain your needs.
- Ask, “Can you work with me on that? It’s really important to me.”
- Sometimes parents discover they and their caregivers disagree about things that are important to them. Although both want a safe birth, they may not have the same beliefs about how to achieve that goal.
- Occasionally, mothers and caregivers cannot work out their differences and mothers may need to change caregivers.
Having access to the latest technology does not guarantee you a perfect outcome.

Avoiding technology completely does not guarantee you a perfect outcome.

Try to keep a balanced, open-minded attitude, and remember that most births turn out safely, no matter how a baby is born.

Birth is usually very safe, but every birth is different. It’s important to be flexible and consider all your options because different situations call for different actions.
Resources for Parents
Childbirth Classes

- Birthing from Within
- The Bradley Method
- Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association (CAPPA)
- Hypnobabies
- International Childbirth Education Association
- Lamaze International
Resources for Parents
Mother-Friendly Providers

- BirthNetwork National
- Choices in Childbirth
- Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
  Endorsers of the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative
- Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
  The Birth Survey
Resources for Parents
Midwives

- American College of Nurse-Midwives
  Find a Midwife
- The Big Push for Midwives
- Citizens For Midwifery
- Midwives Alliance of North America
- Mothers Naturally
Resources for Parents
Doulas

- Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association (CAPPA)
- DONA International
  The Essential Ingredient: Doula (YouTube film)
- International Childbirth Education Association
- Lamaze International
  Healthy Birth Practice 3: Bring a Loved One, Friend or Doula for Continuous Support