Outcomes in Midwife Attended Births Compared to Traditional Options

by Pamela Jones, MA

Midwives provide care for pregnant women through pregnancy, labor, and delivery. Their method of care tends to rely less on medical tests and devices and works to include family members. Midwives usually do not work with high-risk pregnancies unless working closely with a doctor. There are many different types of midwives with varying degrees of education. This delivery option is gaining in popularity.

The Cochrane Library conducted a review of several past studies to determine the safety of midwife birth when compared to traditional hospital delivery. The review found that there was no increased risk for this type of delivery. In fact, women that gave birth with midwives had some benefits.

About the Study

There were 11 trials included in the review with a total of 12,276 women. The study reviewed outcomes of births delivered in a traditional setting versus a midwife approach. There was no statistical difference between the groups for death of newborns. However, women with midwives were:

- More likely to have spontaneous vaginal birth, have high perceptions of control, and initiate breastfeeding
- Less likely to use analgesia or anesthesia, need hospitalization, have an episiotomy (a surgical cut between vagina and rectum), or need forceps or vacuum assisted birth
- More likely to have infants that had shorter stays in hospital

How Does This Affect You?

There are many different birth programs and options. Look for a program you feel most comfortable with. Communicate your choices and needs to whatever provider you choose. There are varying levels of certifications among midwives. Make sure to discuss these when looking for a midwife.

If you have a high-risk pregnancy your choices may be limited. Discuss your options with your doctor.

RESOURCES:

American Pregnancy
http://www.americanpregnancy.org/

Midwives Alliance of North America
http://mana.org/

REFERENCES:


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