



## What is a Midwife?

**Midwives** are the traditional care providers for mothers and infants. Midwives are trained professionals with expertise and skills in supporting women to maintain healthy pregnancies and have optimal births and recoveries during the postpartum period. Midwives provide women with individualized care uniquely suited to their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs. Midwifery is a woman-centered empowering model of maternity care that is utilized in all of the countries of the world.

\* **Midwives** may practice in private homes, clinics, birth centers, and hospitals. In most countries, midwives are primary health care providers and the central pillar in maternity care and women's health care. However, slightly more than 10% of births in the U.S. are attended by midwives.

\* **Midwives** value communication and developing a trusting, working relationship with the women and families they serve. In the course of developing that relationship, midwives provide personalized and thorough care at many levels: preconception, pregnancy, labor, birth, postpartum, and beyond. Many midwives provide primary health care, gynecological care, and care of the normal newborn. Some midwives prescribe medications including family planning and contraceptive methods. In addition to being trained to conduct comprehensive physical exams and order laboratory, screening and other diagnostic tests, midwives provide extensive health care education and counseling, as well as engage in shared decision-making with their clients and patients.

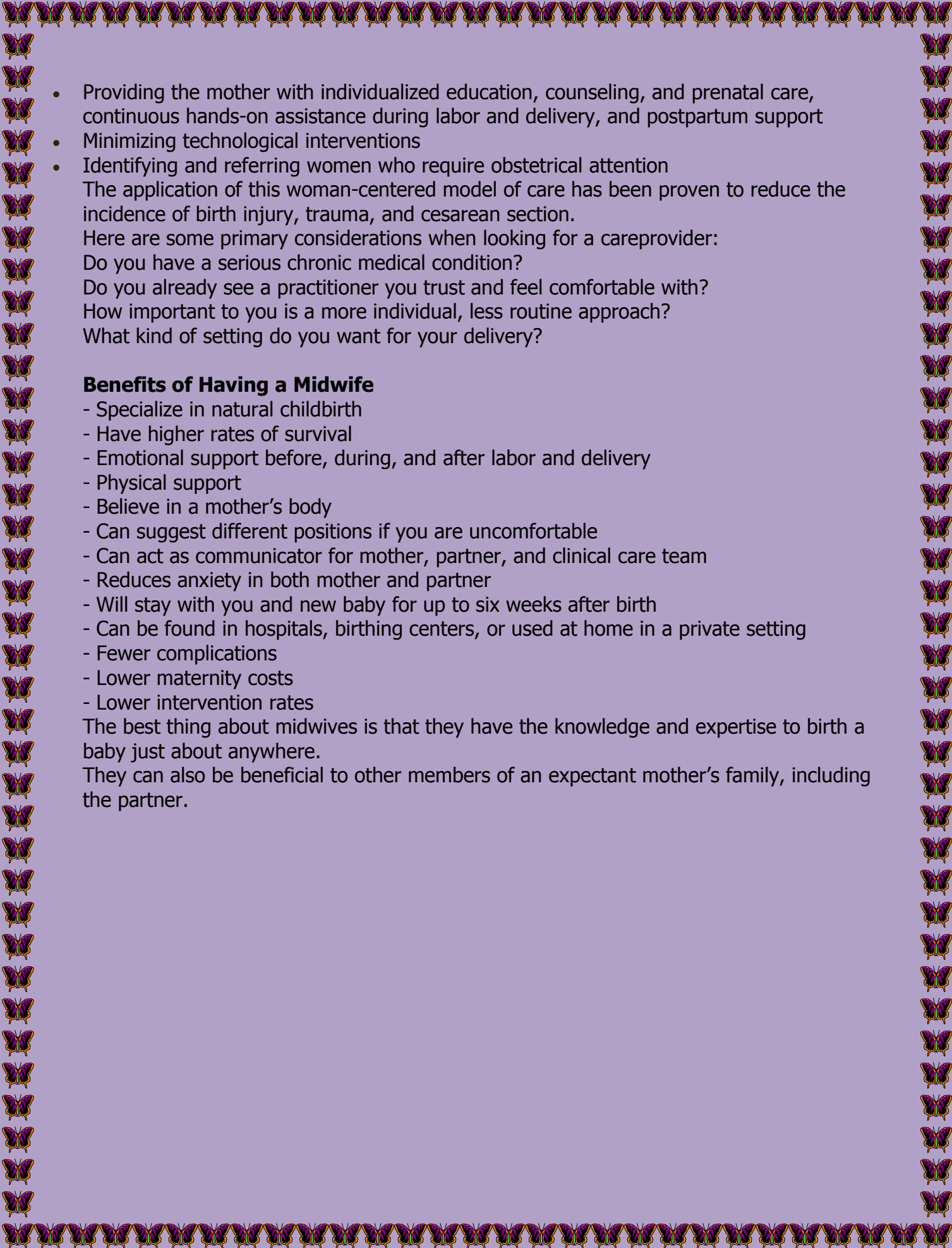
\* **The most common types of midwives** are listed below including the three professional U.S. midwifery credentials: Certified Professional Midwives (CPM), Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNM), and Certified Midwives (CM); including Direct-Entry Midwife (DEM)

\* In addition, there are midwives who—for religious, personal, and philosophical reasons—choose not to become certified or licensed. Typically they are called **Traditional or Community-based Midwives**. They believe that they are ultimately accountable to the communities they serve; or that midwifery is a social contract between the midwife and client/patient, and should not be legislated at all; or that women have a right to choose qualified care providers regardless of their legal status.

**The Midwives Model of Care** is based on the fact that pregnancy and birth are normal life processes.

The Midwives Model of Care includes:

- Monitoring the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the mother throughout the childbearing cycle

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- Providing the mother with individualized education, counseling, and prenatal care, continuous hands-on assistance during labor and delivery, and postpartum support
  - Minimizing technological interventions
  - Identifying and referring women who require obstetrical attention

The application of this woman-centered model of care has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth injury, trauma, and cesarean section.

Here are some primary considerations when looking for a careprovider:

Do you have a serious chronic medical condition?

Do you already see a practitioner you trust and feel comfortable with?

How important to you is a more individual, less routine approach?

What kind of setting do you want for your delivery?

### **Benefits of Having a Midwife**

- Specialize in natural childbirth
- Have higher rates of survival
- Emotional support before, during, and after labor and delivery
- Physical support
- Believe in a mother's body
- Can suggest different positions if you are uncomfortable
- Can act as communicator for mother, partner, and clinical care team
- Reduces anxiety in both mother and partner
- Will stay with you and new baby for up to six weeks after birth
- Can be found in hospitals, birthing centers, or used at home in a private setting
- Fewer complications
- Lower maternity costs
- Lower intervention rates

The best thing about midwives is that they have the knowledge and expertise to birth a baby just about anywhere.

They can also be beneficial to other members of an expectant mother's family, including the partner.