

# The Wellness Family

Drs. Patrick and Gerri Ryan Keep You Informed

## Choosing a Home Birth

Women know that pregnancy is not a medical condition that has to be treated but instead is a natural occurrence that should be celebrated; and, despite major professional societies condemning the practice, over 28,000 American babies were born at home in 2008. This represents .67% of the 4.2 million total births according to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). An average of 1% may not seem substantial but it's a 20% increase from the .56% delivered in 2004.

### **Who gives birth at home?**

According to the NCHS report published in the September 2010 issue of *Birth*, more women are choosing to have their babies at home and, perhaps more surprising to the researchers than the 20% increase, was the 94% of that increase being attributed to non-Hispanic white women. In 2008, over 80% of the home births were by Caucasian women.

A landmark study published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) in June of 2005 studied over 5,400 low-risk pregnant women planning to birth at home in the United States and Canada, then analyzed and compared the results to the outcomes of over 3 million low-risk hospital births. The BMJ press release stated the following:

- 88% of the women birthed at home, with 12% transferring to hospital
- Planned home birth carried a rate of 1.7 infant deaths per 1,000 births, a rate "consistent with most North American studies of intended births out of hospital and low-risk hospital births"
- There were no maternal deaths
- Medical intervention rates of planned home births were dramatically lower than of planned hospital births, including: episiotomy rate of 2.1% (33% in hospital), cesarean section rate of 3.7% (19% in hospital), forceps rate of 1% (2.2% in hospital), induction rate of 9.6% (21% in hospital), and electronic fetal monitoring rate of 9.6% (94.3% in hospital).
- 97% of over 500 participants who were randomly contacted to validate birth outcomes reported that they were extremely or very satisfied with the care they received.

### **Who delivers babies at home?**

This same study reported that planning a home birth attended by a Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)

"offers as safe an outcome for low-risk mothers and babies as does a hospital birth." This "largest of its kind" study was heralded as groundbreaking by the Midwives Alliance of North America.

The authors of this study found that Certified Professional Midwives "achieve good outcomes among low risk women without routine use of expensive hospital interventions," which challenged the many unnecessary interventions routinely performed in low-risk hospital births.

The report supports what midwives have always said: planned home births with a trained midwife are a safe, high-quality, cost-effective, emotionally-satisfying way to have babies.



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Even the World Health Organization in 1996 said, "Midwives are the most appropriate primary healthcare provider to be assigned to the care of normal birth." This was supported by the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services' 1996 statement that "Midwives attend the vast majority of births in those industrialized countries with the best perinatal outcomes."

### **Why deliver your baby at home?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, home birthing in the United States is on the rise, despite the fact that only 27 of the 50 states actually license midwives.

A Time magazine article in September of 2010 stated that women who choose to give birth at home are trying to "avoid what they deem overmedicalized childbirth". When considering that 32% of hospital births result in a c-section, and that studies have shown home births have far fewer medical interventions, it's understandable that women are making the choice to give birth at home.

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Choosing to give birth at home with a midwife has many benefits that far outweigh the services provided at a hospital. For instance, a midwife will spend time with the expecting mother developing a relationship built on trust. This is proven by simple statistics: "the average prenatal visit to a midwife lasts 30-45 minutes (and longer if the woman is planning a home birth), compared to a 5-7 minutes obstetrician's average with their patients."

A study published in the Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health in 2009 questioned 160 American women who had chosen homebirth. The women were mostly married (91%), white (87%) and college educated (62%). When asked "Why did you choose home birth?", the majority of the women (38%) stated for safety or to avoid the unnecessary medical interventions common in hospital births. Some women (37%) had a previous negative hospital experience, and then some wanted more control over the birth process (35%) or preferred a comfortable, familiar environment (30%).

### **Global Home Birth Statistics**

In many countries home birth is as common as a hospital birth and, in some cases, hospital births are reserved solely for high-risk pregnancies or are the result of an unforeseen circumstance requiring a home to hospital transfer.

In the Netherlands, Certified Professional Midwives are integrated into the medical system making home births easier and more common. An in-depth study in 2009 of the 529,688 women who gave birth in the Netherlands determined that 321,307 (60.7%) intended to give birth at home and 163,261 (30.8%) planned to give birth in a hospital. For the other 45,120 (8.5%) the intended birth place was unknown.

This study resulted in no significant differences between planned home and planned hospital birth when it came to infant death or admission to neonatal intensive care unit.

These results were similar to a 1996 study published in the British Medical Journal that determined there was no relation between the planned place of birth and the perinatal outcome. In multiparous (women who gave birth to more than one child during one birth, i.e., twins, triplets, etc.) perinatal outcome was "significantly better for planned home births than for planned hospital births, with or without control for background variables." The authors found that the outcome of planned home births is "at least as good" as that of planned hospital births for low-risk women in the Netherlands.

A study published in 2010 found that planned home births accounted for .38% of a little over 300,000 births in South Australia and that these had lower c-section and instrumental delivery rates and a seven times lower episiotomy rate than planned hospital births.

Additionally, a 2009 study showed that women who planned a home birth with a registered midwife in British Columbia were overwhelmingly positive about their experience.

### ***In Summary***

As women are becoming aware that there are more choices for how and where to deliver their babies, the decision to give birth at home will definitely become a more common one. Statistics are proving that home births are on the rise and your Family Wellness Chiropractor will always support a woman's choice to deliver at home.

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For an informative video on home births visit  
[www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com/](http://www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com/)

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*Dear Patient,*

*Drs. Patrick and Gerri Ryan are dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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