

# Pregnancy: Learning About Doctors and Midwives

Deciding who takes care of you during your pregnancy, labor, and delivery is your choice.

Respectful health care starts by finding a doctor or midwife who you're comfortable with.

As you learn about your options for care, keep in mind that you are choosing a health professional to be on your care team.

Your team may also include your partner, a loved one, or a friend.

Doctors and midwives are trained to provide medical care and support before, during, and after you give birth.

And there's another professional you may choose to add to your team—a doula.

A doula is a birth coach who can support you while you're in labor, delivering your baby, and after the baby is born.

If you're interested in working with a doula, ask your friends, doctor, midwife, or hospital for recommendations.

Now here's a little information about doctors and midwives.

Doctors and midwives share the same goal.

They want you and your baby to be healthy.

But their training and approaches may be different.

Here's what to know about midwives.

Midwives may not do as many medical tests as doctors.

They may work, though, with a doctor to order tests.

And they often teach you how to use nonmedical options to manage pain during labor.

If you work with a midwife, you may be able to have your baby at a hospital, a birthing center, or at home.

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There are different types of midwives with different levels of training, certification, and licensing.

In the United States, certified nurse-midwives are registered nurses (RNs) who have midwifery training and certification.

Certified professional midwives (CPMs) are certified after training and being apprenticed to an experienced midwife.

In Canada, certified midwives must be licensed in the provinces and territories where they practice.

Lay midwives aren't required to have professional medical training.

They learn through an apprenticeship with an experienced midwife and through workshops and classes.

They are not certified or licensed.

They may not have the medical training for handling complicated labor or emergencies.

If you plan to give birth at home, make sure ahead of time that you have medical backup and a hospital nearby in case of an emergency.

Doctors have more medical training than midwives.

For example, doctors can perform medical procedures like an amniocentesis or a cesarean (C-section) delivery.

Doctors are also trained to treat more serious problems.

Doctors who can deliver babies include obstetricians, who specialize in pregnancy care, and perinatologists, who specialize in high-risk pregnancy.

And some family medicine doctors also provide pregnancy care.

Whether you choose a doctor or a midwife, or if you want to include a doula, it's important to find the people who can work closely with you and share in decision-making.

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This partnership is key to having the pregnancy and birth experience you want.

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