In a country where medical interventions in childbirth have become the norm, what is a normal birth and why is it important?

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Putney, VT - Today, the United States’ three midwifery organizations—American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), and National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)—have released a historic consensus statement. Supporting Healthy and Normal Physiologic Childbirth: A Consensus Statement by ACNM, MANA, and NACPM gives maternity care providers, policymakers, and women a succinct summary of the evidence for the benefits of normal physiologic childbirth.

“There is scientific evidence that suggests that the spontaneous onset of labor results from an alignment of the mother’s and fetus’s physiology and has beneficial health effects for both. It is important that these processes be supported by maternity providers whenever possible,” said ACNM President Holly Powell Kennedy, CNM, PhD, FACNM, FAAN.

In addition to clearly defining normal physiologic childbirth, the statement outlines the benefits of normal physiologic birth, including improved breathing and temperature regulation of the newborn, successful breastfeeding, and mother-infant bonding. The statement describes the factors that support or disrupt the normal physiologic capacity of the mother and baby during birth, including the mother’s health status, the education and care style of the clinician, and the birth environment.

“Research on early childhood development, from conception through the first moments, days and years after birth, confirm how critical it is to foster a supportive environment for women and newborns through birth and the postpartum period,” says MANA’s Executive Director, Geradine Simkins, CNM, MSN. “The foundation of social and emotional competence is shaped by the interactions newborns have with their mothers, and evidence suggests that normal physiological birth plays a role in healthy mother-infant attachment.”
The statement concludes with system-wide recommendations for policy, education, and research that promote normal physiologic childbirth. The organizations call for supportive hospital policies, more midwives, interdisciplinary education of maternity care providers, and widespread commitment to evidence-based clinical practice.

“For the well-being of childbearing women and society at-large, we must shift from the current over-reliance on the medical management of birth, back to an understanding and respect for the normal physiology of birth”, said Mary Lawlor, CPM, MA, Executive Director of NACPM. “This statement supports a new cultural dialogue for all involved, from clinicians to women themselves, and provides the evidence needed to foster a renewed emphasis on the innate wisdom of the physiology of women and babies.”


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The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional association that represents certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in the United States. ACNM promotes excellence in midwifery education, clinical practice, and research. With roots dating to 1929, our members are primary care providers for women throughout the lifespan, with a special emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, and gynecologic and reproductive health. ACNM provides research, administers and promotes continuing education programs, establishes clinical practice standards, and creates liaisons with state and federal agencies and members of Congress to increase the visibility and recognition of midwifery care.

The Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA) is a professional membership organization that promotes excellence in midwifery, endorses diversity in educational backgrounds and practice styles, and is dedicated to unifying and strengthening the profession, thereby increasing access to quality health care and improving outcomes for women, babies, and families. Founded in 1982, the Midwives Alliance advocates for high quality, accessible, affordable, women-centered, culturally competent maternity care as exemplified by the midwifery model of care. The Midwives Alliance is one of only two organizations in North America that collects data on births that primarily occur in out-of-hospital settings through the MANA Statistics project. The data resulting from this project is available to researchers who apply for access.
The National Association of Certified Professional Midwives is the membership organization specifically representing certified professional midwives (CPM) in the United States. CPMs, a rapidly growing segment of the profession, are primary maternity care providers trained to offer high-quality, evidence-based care to women during the childbearing year, incorporating best practices to foster normal physiologic birth. CPMs may qualify to provide care in all settings, with special training for service in homes and free-standing birth centers. Founded in 2001, NACPM has adopted a policy agenda for promoting integration of CPMs into the maternity care system, addressing barriers to practice, supporting licensing in all 50 states, promoting quality care through clinical practice resources, and engaging in state and federal advocacy to increase women’s access to quality care and address birth outcome disparities.