

Comparing births in hospitals to birth with midwives is a difficult task, for midwives screen the births they take, insuring they have few high-risk pregnancies. Generally besides having better mortality statistics, they provide a much gentler and humane touch to birth. As mentioned before, midwives average 1 hour per prenatal meeting with their clients, while doctors spend on average 10 minutes. Midwives (which means “with woman”) basically stay the entire labor with their clients, rather than showing up for the last 30 minutes, as is the case with many obstetricians.

Ina May Gaskins, a famous midwife from Tennessee, reported that out of 1707 births she attended 95.6 percent successfully delivered vaginally. 4.4% transferred to a hospital. None of her mothers died and eight babies died (3 from lethal birth defects, 1 from respiratory failure, three from severe prematurity, and one of unknown causes). The neonatal mortality rate was 4 per thousand. These statistics are comparable with other midwives.