FEATURE TOPIC:

Mother and Baby

Midwifery: A Suite Situation
Special Delivery: The “Baby Friendly” Way
New Baby, New Doctor: Choosing Your Pediatrician
The birth of a child is one of the greatest joys in life. As a parent, and as a physician, I can personally attest that there are very few, if any, milestones in life that can compare. About 30 years ago, I saw my first birth during my clinical rotation in medical school, and about 10 years later my wife gave birth to our own first child. Both events are deeply imprinted in my mind as moments of pure joy.

At St. Vincent’s, we have cared for generations of families from birth and throughout life. We will get you and your baby off to a great start and will be there for you and your entire family along the way. From your baby’s first checkup and through every scraped knee, sniffle, and school physical, we will be there. Our network of skilled providers will be there as mother, father and baby transition along this amazing journey.

Yes, we’ll be there for Mom, Dad, Brother and Sister too – even Grandma and Grandpa. Like your family, the St. Vincent’s family is growing. Our network of physicians offers the best in primary care, obstetrics, pediatrics and specialty medicine. Our Health & Wellness and Urgent Care Centers are where you work and live and we continue to expand in the fields of telemedicine and self-wellness through platforms such as planMYcare.com, MYvirtualcare.com and the Grow mobile app, the newest addition to our family.

Where and how you raise your family matters. At St. Vincent’s, we’re not only your caregivers; we’re your neighbors, friends and family members. From our family to yours, we wish you good health and happiness, for life.

Stuart G. Marcus, MD, FACS
President/CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center
Grow baby, grow…

You make your family healthcare decisions, and we’ve hired you a personal assistant.

You juggle many roles – mom, wife, boss, daughter, and family chief medical officer. St. Vincent’s can help make your family’s health journey a little easier. The Grow app manages your family’s health appointments – from maternity to pediatrics and family medicine. Get advice, reminders, and schedule appointments on your smartphone. Kids don’t come with an instruction manual, but we’ve got your back.

✓ Expert Advice
✓ Appointment Scheduling
✓ Reminders

To download the Grow app, your personal healthcare assistant, go to stvincents.org/grow.

DOWNLOAD THE GROW APP
YOUR PERSONAL HEALTHCARE ASSISTANT
How far would you travel to have your baby in the safest possible setting - a place as comfortable as home? For 31-year-old Laura Geyer of Canton, Connecticut, the answer was about an hour and a half. “It took us that long to get to The Birthplace at St. Vincent’s,” said the mama of newborn George, 8 lbs. 13 oz. “But it wouldn’t have mattered if it took four hours. I knew I’d have all that comfort at St. Vincent’s plus the reassurance of the hospital’s obstetricians just steps away.”

The Birthplace
Having chosen the Birthplace previously for the arrival of their now three-year-old daughter, Charlotte, Laura and her husband – also George – felt the quiet environment would be right for them and perfect for their newborn. “I’d be able to walk around freely in a nice room with complete privacy while I waited,” Laura said. “And I knew Sarah would be there with us, just as she was when I had Charlotte.”

Meet the Nurse Midwife
“Sarah” is Sarah Najamy, CNM, a certified nurse midwife with 30 years of experience in all areas of women’s gynecological healthcare and midwifery. “I’ve been with her practice since I was 17,” said Geyer. “She’s been a total blessing in our family’s lives.” Najamy’s Circle for Life Midwifery practice in Shelton sees women of all age groups. She is joined in the practice by three other certified nurse midwives: Paula Cate, Parvin Kasarian and Jemine Weyman.

Midwifery’s Long History
In many wealthy industrialized countries, including the United Kingdom, Sweden and Japan, midwives attend most births and far outnumber obstetricians. From ancient times, the practice of a mother being fully engaged in the birthing experience has held firm in those societies.

While midwives attended virtually all births in the earliest American colonies, things had changed significantly by the 1900s. Maternity care and childbirth became almost exclusively handled by obstetricians.

Back to Basics
In recent decades, there has been renewed interest here in the role of midwifery in healthcare.
“Our patients want to be in control of their birthing experience as much as possible. As midwives, we take the time to explain everything, but we don’t take over.”

Sarah Najamy, CNM
Nurse Midwife, Circle for Life Midwifery

The CDC’s 2014 National Statistics Report – the most recent such report – shows nurse midwife-assisted hospital births at eight percent. Now, in 2016, that number is growing.

Beyond the Baby
“People are becoming better informed,” Najamy said. “Midwifery is not just about childbirth. Women are looking for a provider with a full range of knowledge about their health needs.

As certified midwives, we undergo rigorous training including in general care, gynecology, family planning and treatment of all types of infection – from the early teenage years on through and past menopause.”

You’re In Control
“Our patients want to be in control of their birthing experience as much as possible,” Najamy said. “As midwives, we take the time to explain everything, but we don’t take over. We’re there to support Mom and only call in a physician when we feel something is out of normal.”

St. Vincent’s expertly staffed labor and delivery and state-of-the-art neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) continue to be available to women who choose it or who have a midwife-assisted birthing that medically requires it.

A Suite Situation
“The beauty of St. Vincent’s/Ascension partnership is that they took our collaborative plan and created a space where women have the choice of birthing in a home-style setting,” Najamy said. The Birthplace is comprised of two suites, each with a queen-size bed, private bath and full kitchen, creating a comfortable setting for the family to be there during the process if Mom so desires.

“When it was time, I had the choice of how to deliver – even in the tub if I wanted.”

“While I waited, I could eat, drink, shower when I wanted to,” she said. “It was all up to me. When it was time, I had the choice of how to deliver and where. Even in the tub, if I wanted. Then, having that skin-to-skin contact with my baby and being able to do the cord clamping – it was all so important to me.”

Successful Outcomes
Overall outcomes of nurse midwife-assisted births are proof positive that this rising trend in childbirth bodes well.

Najamy, who has assisted in the birthing of some 6,000 babies, noted the rate for Caesarian sections was low for women who choose this type of experience.

“Our Caesarian rate is about 3.5 percent as opposed to 33 percent nationwide,” she said.

Najamy credits her patients themselves for seeking out midwifery for their healthcare. “These women are motivated,” she said. “We think of them as high-consciousness consumers. Many, if not most, are able to go home in as little as eight to 12 hours after giving birth.”

Geyer’s assessment is similar. “To me, it’s about trusting yourself versus just being told what to do,” she said. “I can’t imagine why anyone wouldn’t consider midwifery.”

To learn more about Midwifery and The Birthplace at St. Vincent’s, visit stvincents.org/birthplace.
Delivering Success
“Expectant parents often ask if we are able to respond to any obstetric challenge that might arise during pregnancy, labor and delivery," said St. Vincent’s William Cusick, MD. “And I answer them: Yes. We are at the ready. We have the best-trained and experienced staff available. We work in the best and most advanced medical facility. We are prepared to tackle all obstetric challenges, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Dr. Cusick is a staff obstetrician at St. Vincent’s and chairperson of the hospital’s OB/GYN department, overseeing operations. “Our team members are some of the best in the field, and are always accessible. Always. We have an obstetrician and pediatrician here at all times, and our anesthesiologists provide round-the-clock coverage, should their services be needed. Our dedication to new and expectant parents is peerless.”

Delivering Expertise
In addition to medical professionals, the hospital employs staff who are trained and experienced in offering new and expectant parents the full spectrum of newborn and postpartum care. “We have all the services that new and expectant parents need, and more,” said Cindy Czapinski, St. Vincent’s clinical vice president of maternal child health and nursing operations.

Czapinski noted that St. Vincent’s obstetricians and nurse midwives work together with more than 50 pediatricians and other multidisciplinary specialists on the full-spectrum of care for newborns.

Moms and families are encouraged to seek advice and support from any of these staff members who range from maternal and fetal health counselors, and genetic counselors to lactation and breastfeeding support specialists.

Delivering Choices
“Everyone works together as a member of a team,” Czapinski said.

“We are a designated Baby Friendly hospital, and are proud to be the first hospital in Fairfield County to have earned the Baby Friendly distinction, which was awarded to us from the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund.”

“We view Mom as the Chief Medical Officer for her family,” Czapinski said. “She makes decisions for herself and her newborn, in consultation with her family and our staff. This empowerment extends to pain control, for example. Some women who choose natural childbirth do not want to have an epidural administered, while others insist on it. At St. Vincent’s, we want to ensure Mom has as many options available to her as possible.”

Delivering More Options
St. Vincent’s offers expectant mothers the option to deliver her child in one of two comfortably appointed private birthing suites. Women who choose this option, which may include an underwater birth, do so under the guidance of a nurse midwife.

“We are prepared to tackle all obstetric challenges, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

William Cusick, MD
Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology
“Bonding between Mom and baby starts immediately after birth. Skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding early help to create that healthful bond.”

Cindy Czaplinski, MSN, RN
Clinical VP, Maternal & Child Health

They also know that, just a few steps away, should they need medical services, they are connected to the technologically advanced epicenter of the Family Birthing and Maternity Center, located just outside their door.

St. Vincent’s Family Birthing and Maternity Center has seven beds for labor and delivery and 20 postpartum beds where mothers stay after their babies are born. “The baby stays in the Mom’s room,” Czaplinski said. “Bonding between mother and baby starts immediately after birth. We believe in skin-to-skin contact, and we encourage Mom to start breastfeeding early to create that healthful bond.”

St. Vincent’s is also equipped with a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) that provides care for premature, underweight and at-risk babies.

The NICU is staffed 24 hours by a full-time neonatologist and specially trained neonatal nurses. A nursery is also available for assessment, treatment and stabilization of newborns with medical concerns.

**Delivering Safety**

Dr. Cusick said that new and expectant mothers and their families choose St. Vincent’s because of its reputation as a medical facility dedicated to the individual needs of its patients.

“St. Vincent’s is deeply committed to providing a culture of safety, a mission we embarked on very early on, many years before other hospitals embraced it,” Dr. Cusick said. “We take our responsibility toward fostering this culture of safety seriously. It is reflected in everything we do. The patient experience here is exceptional.”

“Many of our expectant parents were born here themselves,” he adds. “The legacy of St. Vincent’s combined with the latest technology and that culture of safety is why you’ll find generations of families returning.”

To learn more about St. Vincent’s Family Birthing Center, visit stvincents.org/fbc

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**Baby-Friendly**

Baby-Friendly designation signifies St. Vincent’s excellence in maternal and infant care. To achieve designation, hospitals must follow a strict set of guidelines and requirements. Our experienced nurses are experts in best practices such as skin-to-skin care, rooming in and breastfeeding support. Baby-Friendly hospitals ensure the highest level of care in infant nutrition education, mother-infant bonding, and confidence-building in the parenting process.
Choosing a Pediatrician:
A New Doctor for Baby
How and When to Start the Search

Decisions, Decisions
You’ll make many important choices for your child – and his or her doctor is one of them. When choosing a pediatrician, it’s important to first compile a list of your wants, needs and concerns, to determine if the doctor and staff are the right fit for you and your new family.

Do Your Homework
“As a new parent, you will have a lot of questions, and I always recommend researching these questions online or at your library beforehand and to come to the first meeting prepared to ask them,” said Robert Chessin, MD, a pediatrician with Pediatric Healthcare Associates in Bridgeport. “We have a saying at our practice: ‘There are no bad questions.’ Don’t be afraid to ask us any question, whether it’s about breastfeeding, immunization, anything you’ve ever worried about, and everything else along the way. We’ll gladly answer any question you ask.”

Dr. Chessin has been in pediatric practice for 38 years, serving parents and their families in the greater Bridgeport community. He urges expectant parents to schedule an initial “get acquainted” meeting. There is no charge for this first meeting, which he calls a “pre-visit.”

It’s an important first step for new parents to have a candid discussion with a pediatrician about their expectations and concerns.

When to Start “Shopping”
While it’s up to the patient, a good time to start looking for a pediatrician is during your seventh month of pregnancy. This will give you the opportunity to do your research and meet more than one doctor if need be. You may want to ask friends or neighbors for input as well. You’ll want to be sure the pediatrician you choose is board certified and affiliated with your hospital of choice.

“You will also want to look at the kind of practice he or she is part of,” Dr. Chessin continued. “For example, if you are working parents, you’ll want to find out if the practice has evening and weekend hours to accommodate your schedule.”

During the pre-visit, Dr. Chessin also recommends that new parents explore how the pediatrician handles emergencies or acute illnesses that might arise, such as colds, infections, sore throats and other health concerns. Many parents worry about these potential health challenges.
“Don’t be afraid to ask us any question...anything you’ve ever worried about, and everything else along the way.”

Robert Chessin, MD
Pediatric Healthcare Associates

The pediatrician should be comfortable telling you his or her availability on short notice when these illnesses occur.

Establishing a Comfort Level
Once you’ve established a comfort level with the pediatrician, it becomes easier to explore other questions about your pregnancy, and once the newborn arrives, how to care for your child. “Many new parents I have seen over the years express concerns around breastfeeding,” Dr. Chessin said. “On our staff we have a lactation specialist who works with new mothers and who counsels them on how to prepare to feed their newborn.”

A frequent concern Dr. Chessin confronts among new parents is the anxiety mothers sometimes feel when they leave the hospital after giving birth and return home. “New mothers are discharged from the hospital soon after the birth, and her milk does not start to come until 3-5 days after the birth,” Dr. Chessin said.

“This causes new moms to worry. At St. Vincent’s there is a lactation specialist on staff who helps prepare you, and the hospital goes to great lengths to connect you with community resources. But once out of the hospital and on her own, a new breastfeeding mom is bound to have concerns, and we’re prepared to help.”

“At St. Vincent’s, there is a lactation specialist on staff who helps to support and prepare you.”

An Important Transition
Dr. Chessin and his staff encourage new mothers to take their time when transitioning back home with a new baby. “There’s a lot of data compiled by the American Academy of Pediatrics about the importance of breastfeeding,” Dr. Chessin said.

“And in our practice, we work it into our schedule after the new mom is discharged. We routinely see a mom two days after she’s left the hospital, so we’re there for you to help you get started with breastfeeding, and to continue breastfeeding your child, if that is what you choose to do.”

Dr. Chessin said he is rewarded by the relationships he has established over many years of practicing pediatrics. “I truly enjoy being there for parents and their children,” he said. “At our practice, we are here to establish a long-term partnership with you and your child or children.”

To find a pediatrician in your area, use our Find a Doctor tool at stvincents.org.

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Questions to Ask a Pediatrician
- Do you take my insurance?
- What are your office hours?
- Who is on call when you’re not available?
- What are your certifications?

Questions to Ask Yourself
- Is the office clean?
- Are there separate sick and well waiting areas?
- Is the staff friendly?
- Did you feel rushed?
**Q & A**

**Q** If my baby is a boy, will he be circumcised while I’m in the hospital?

Melendez: Yes, if you choose circumcision, the obstetrician typically performs the procedure after 24 hours of age. It is done right in the labor and delivery department, takes about 15 to 20 minutes, and then baby goes right back to be with his mom. Some baby boys are sleepy and quiet after the procedure, while others may be a bit fussy and seek the comfort of Mom at the breast.

Over the past few years we have seen a slight increase in families choosing not to circumcise for a variety of reasons. It’s most common to follow suit of the other males in the family. The circumcision decision is a personal one.

**Q** Is it true that I shouldn’t sleep on my back while I’m pregnant?

Dr. Darak: We advise that pregnant women avoid sleeping on their backs during the second and third trimesters. The growing uterus becomes heavy and can compress the Vena Cava, a large blood vessel in the abdomen, which can result in decreased blood flow and oxygen to the fetus. Pregnant women should sleep on either their left or right side.

Using a pillow between the knees or a full-length body pillow can make this more comfortable. Also, placing a pillow or a wedge behind the back will prevent a pregnant woman from rolling onto her back during sleep.

**Q** If my baby is breech, is a vaginal delivery out of the question?

Dr. Gottschall: While only about seven percent of full-term babies are in the breech position at the onset of labor, the vast majority of those babies are now born by C-section in the U.S. If your baby is breech, your healthcare provider will most likely deliver your baby by C-section, which is the safest approach for both you and your baby.

There are some potentially serious risks and complications associated with a vaginal delivery of a breech baby ranging from injury to death. These risks could be 33 percent higher compared to those born by C-section.

Melissa Melendez, RNC-MNN
Nurse Manager
Family Birthing Center

Leah Darak, MD
Obstetrics/Gynecology
Bridgeport, CT

Daniel Gottschall, MD, FACOG
Obstetrics/Gynecology
Bridgeport, CT
I plan to breastfeed my baby. What can I do to avoid challenges?

Palmieri: Congratulations on making the decision to breastfeed your baby!

Once your baby is born, plan to hold her skin-to-skin in the first hour. This usually leads to a successful first breastfeeding session. Rooming in with your baby gives you an advantage in being responsive to early hunger cues from your baby, and gets your milk supply established best.

Should our newborn sleep in our bedroom – and if so for how long?

Dr. Sadinsky: Many parents believe that having their newborn baby sleep in their bedroom is convenient, especially if Mom is breastfeeding. Just be sure the baby sleeps in a bassinet and not on your bed.

I recommend that this be limited to the first couple of weeks and that the baby is moved to his or her own room and crib as early as the parents are comfortable doing so. Establish the baby’s crib as a safe environment; the baby and the parents will sleep better with this sleeping arrangement.

Need the facts on a health topic? Email healthtalk@stvincents.org with your questions.
If you’re ready to start a family, it’s time to plan your birthing experience—your way. Whether it’s with a certified midwife or a physician, St. Vincent’s Baby-friendly and Mom-friendly experts will support you every step of the way—mind, body and spirit.

☑ Designated Baby-Friendly hospital
☑ Homelike midwifery suites
☑ Special Care Nursery/NICU
☑ Lactation and breastfeeding specialists

Choose our care team who will help welcome your bundle of joy

stvincents.org/familybirthing