



Women's Health Overview

Beyond Resolutions: Designing a Life of Health, Strength and Meaning

Every January, we're flooded with messages about fresh starts. New Year's resolutions promise transformation: better sleep, cleaner eating and more movement. We dive in with enthusiasm, fueled by the hope that this year will be different. But by February, many of us have quietly stepped away from those goals.

Why does this happen? Because we often wear short-term goggles. We focus on immediate results, quick fixes and the illusion of overnight change. But what if we used the New Year not just to set goals for the next few weeks, but to design the next 30 years of our lives?

The long view: *Who do you want to be?*

I've always loved numbers. As a child, I watched a documentary that quantified a human life. It provided estimates of how many diapers we use, how many eggs we eat and how many gallons of milk we drink. It was oddly comforting to see life laid out in data. It taught me that daily choices add up.

Now, as I approach a milestone birthday, I find myself reflecting more deeply. I've started to feel aches that weren't there a decade ago. And I ask myself: What do I want my next decade to look like? What

kind of woman do I want to be at 70? I want to feel strong, mentally sharp, capable of living independently, active in my community and surrounded by my family.

Longevity is not just about living longer—it's about living well. And while genetics play a role, our environment and habits shape the quality of our years even more.

So how do we build a life that supports that vision? I see health as a structure supported by six pillars.

1. Sleep: The foundation of recovery.

Sleep is not a luxury—it's a biological necessity. It's when our bodies repair, our brains consolidate memories and our hormones reset. Poor sleep leads to fatigue, mood swings, weight gain and cognitive decline.

The good news: Sleep is trainable. Just as we teach children to follow a bedtime routine, we can teach ourselves. Consistency is key. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Create a calming nighttime ritual. Protect your sleep like you would any important meeting. Search online for "sleep hygiene" for more tips.

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Upcoming Olson Center Educational Events:

We are offering opportunities to learn on a variety of health topics! Everyone is welcome to attend. Pre-registration is required by reaching the Olson Center at 402.559.6345 or OlsonWHRC@unmc.edu.

Olson Center Brown Bags (online, 12 – 1 p.m. CST):

Everyone is welcome to attend the presentation, and talks will also be recorded. Nursing credit provided for the LIVE presentation only.

Jan. 20: Self Care and Wellness Strategies for the New Year

Feb. 17: Coronary Artery Disease and Myocardial Infarction*

March 17: Joint Pain in Menopause

Let's Talk About Heart Health in Women (online, 12 – 1 p.m. CST):

February is heart month and the Olson Center for Women's Health partners with the Nebraska Medicine Heart and Vascular team offers a series of webinars to bring awareness to certain heart health topics.

Feb. 5: Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension

Feb. 10: Heart Failure with Preserved Heart Function

Feb. 26: Alcohol and the Heart

* This presentation is also part of the Heart Health Series



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An alternative electronic version of the newsletter is available. If you would like to receive this electronic version in addition to the print version, or instead of, please email your request to ljmolczy@unmc.edu.

From the Chair

I am honored to share the exciting progress and vision for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Our commitment to transforming maternal and women's health across Nebraska continues to drive innovation in clinical care, research and education.

Our vision is to establish Nebraska Medicine and UNMC as the Midwest's maternal health leader while directly reducing the state's maternal mortality ratio. Our obstetrics transformation initiative is evolving rapidly. This program will expand access to maternal-fetal medicine consultations and ultrasound services to underserved communities, including new potential partnerships with health centers and hospitals.

Under the leadership of Dr. Rebecca Rimsza, we are pioneering a new remote patient monitoring program at Nebraska Medicine, targeting a January 2026 launch to improve postpartum care. We have also started using angiogenic biomarkers, specific blood tests to evaluate women with high blood pressure during pregnancy.

On the research front, we await funding approval from a number of agencies. Our BRIDGE (Building Research, Investigation & Development to include Graduate Education) program is building investigational capacity, and we continue to pursue clinical research opportunities and funding. Thanks to our incredible team including – Drs. Rimsza, Lindsey McAlarnen, Lynda Harris, Carly Jennings, Laura Cudzilo and Isuzu Meyer, a new clinical research coordinator Dr. Santiago Ortiz-Barragan and research administrative team.

Faculty recruitment remains strong, with open positions in maternal-fetal medicine, gynecologic oncology, urogynecology and general ob/gyn (thanks to the efforts of our chiefs Drs. Neil Hamill, Kerry Rodabaugh, Meyer and Jennifer Griffin). We recently welcomed Drs. Marcela Pineda, Nicholas Jesse and Candace Giles to our team, with additional recruits in progress.

Our educational mission thrives with enhanced Grand Rounds programming (Dr. Griffin) and improved educational experiences (Dr. Jennings). Work is underway to expand residency training in ultrasound and ambulatory family planning (Drs. Cudzilo, Hamill and Heather Said).

Other initiatives include enhancing our website (Jami Monico), improving access to gynecological surgery through the Gyn Perioperative Access Committee (GPAC), advancing faculty promotion (Dr. John Davis) and launching Empower Hour, an educational series led by Dr. Pineda and Briley Patterson.

Together, we continue to build on a department that serves as Nebraska's cornerstone for comprehensive women's health. I look forward to our continued growth and impact, and updating you with our progress.

Sarosh Rana, MD, MPH

Professor and Chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
College of Medicine
University of Nebraska Medical Center



research news

Nebraska Center for Women's Health Research Held Its First Women's Health Symposium on Nov. 13

Women have specific health needs, and many diseases affect women differently than men. The Nebraska Center for Women's Health Research (NCWHR) focuses on these differences by creating resources across the University of Nebraska campuses. These resources aim to raise awareness about women's health, how diseases present and progress differently in women and research on health disparities.

The NCWHR held its first Women's Health Research Symposium on Nov. 13, 2025. The event hosted 110 participants, eight speakers and 35 posters. Topics ranged from lab studies to clinical trials, epidemiology and public health, all related to understanding women's health conditions. Program information can be found at unmc.edu/obgyn/research/ncwhr/2025-symposium.

Key speakers included:

- **Dr. Kerrie Moreau, PhD**, professor, Division of Geriatric Medicine, Department of Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and a research health scientist at Eastern Colorado VA Medical Center discussed the menopause and its impact on heart and blood vessel health. Her research looks at how sex hormones and exercise affect aging blood vessels and cardiovascular risk during menopause.
- **Sarosh Rana, MD, MPH, FACOG**, professor and chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, UNMC presented on using specific blood tests to evaluate women with high blood pressure during pregnancy.
- **Robin Lally, PhD, RN, AOCN, FAAN**, professor, College of Nursing, UNMC discussed psychological support for women who survive cancer and the challenges they face.
- **Danae Dinkel, PhD**, professor, School of Health and Kinesiology, College of Education, Health and Human Sciences, UNO talked about how different life stages and environments influence women's health and well-being.
- **Andrea Cupp, PhD**, professor, Department of Animal Science, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UNL shared insights from animal studies on hormone disorders and aging.
- **Sarah Johnson, MPH**, assistant professor, Department of Medical Sciences, College of Allied Health Professions, UNMC focused on cervical cancer screening and making healthcare affordable.
- **Julie Petersen, PhD, MPH**, assistant professor, Department of Epidemiology, College of Public Health, UNMC discussed preconception health and how it can improve pregnancy outcomes and overall women's health.
- **Keenan Taylor, MD**, assistant professor, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, UNMC presented on differences in airway disorders between sexes, especially related to hormones and immune responses.

The Nebraska Center for Women's Health Research is a collaborative effort across multiple colleges and universities. It promotes research and education to improve women's health. The center has 142 members working in five main areas:

- **Women's health:** Autoimmune diseases, endometriosis, fibroids, cancer, menopause, osteoporosis and infections.
- **Endocrine and heart diseases:** Heart disease, diabetes, obesity and environmental toxins.
- **Fertility and pregnancy:** Infertility, breastfeeding, placental and ovarian health and maternal-fetal health.
- **Mental health.**
- **Health disparities and outcomes.**

If you want to join NCWHR or learn more, visit unmc.edu/obgyn/research/ncwhr

Contributed by **John S. Davis, PhD**
UNMC Department of OB-GYN

2. Nutrition: Fueling your future. What we put into our bodies matters. Food, supplements, medications, alcohol and cigarettes all shape our long-term health.

Nutrition doesn't have to be complicated. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Choose whole grains with fiber. Enjoy plant-based proteins like legumes and tofu, balanced with animal proteins if desired. An occasional treat won't derail your health—but daily poor choices will.

And let's be honest: alcohol and smoking have no known health benefits.

3. Movement: Medicine for the body and mind. Exercise is one of the most powerful tools we have. It improves mood, prevents dementia, strengthens bones and reduces the risk of falls. It's not about perfection, it's about consistency.

Even if you have pain, there are options: swimming, walking and chair yoga. Talk to your doctor and get creative. Movement is possible at every stage of life.

4. Community: The power of connection. Humans are social creatures. The pandemic reminded us how isolation deeply affects our health. Community doesn't just happen, it's built.

Whether you've lived in the same town for decades or moved many times, you can create connection. Start with kindness. Say hello. Join a group. Volunteer. Relationships take time, but they're worth the investment.

Your older self will thank you for the friendships you nurture today.

5. Nature: Awe in the everyday. Nature is healing. Morning sunlight boosts mood and regulates sleep. Watching birds, tending to flowers, or gazing at the moon through binoculars can spark joy and wonder.

Even in the city, nature is accessible. A walk in the park, a few houseplants, a moment of stillness under the sky, I invite you to find something inspiring. These small acts reconnect us to something bigger.

6. Spirituality: Meaning beyond the physical. Spirituality doesn't have to mean religion. It's about connecting to the vastness of the universe, to something greater than ourselves. It's the feeling you get when you stand at the edge of the ocean, look up at the stars or sit in quiet reflection.

Whether through meditation, prayer, journaling or simply moments of awe, nurturing your spiritual life adds depth and resilience. It helps us find meaning, especially in times of change or challenge.

Your future self will be grateful for the inner peace you cultivate today.

Designing your future starts now
We plan financially for retirement. Why not plan physically, mentally and spiritually too?

This New Year, don't just set goals for January. Set a vision for 2056. Picture your future self. What choices today will help you become that person?

Take off the short-term goggles. Put on the lens of longevity. Every decision counts. Ask yourself more often if what you are doing will lead you to your future self. Every day is a chance to invest in your future health, strength and joy.

Start now.

Contributed by **Marcela Pineda, MD**
UNMC Department of OB-GYN



Marcela Pineda, MD recently joined the Olson Center for Women's Health as a general OB-GYN provider. She received her medical degree from the Universidad Francisco Marroquin and then completed a residency at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Queens, New York. She is fluent in Spanish and is passionate about women's health and education as a critical component for improving health.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Olson Center for Women's Health is to provide a national comprehensive health science center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC).

Based in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the center enables UNMC to make distinctive strides in education, research and service through innovative approaches to women's health issues.

Want More Information?

Visit our website: OlsonCenter.com

Learn more about our health care providers, services and programs available at the Olson Center for Women's Health. Our website also offers women's health information.

Here are a few topics:

- Breastfeeding
- Breast health and disease
- Cardiovascular health
- Gastrointestinal health
- Gynecologic health
- Incontinence
- Reproductive endocrinology/infertility
- Pregnancy
- Wellness

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A Gentle, Empowering Option for Natural Deliveries

Whether you're preparing to welcome your first baby or expanding your family, we now offer a new option designed with intention, warmth and care.

A thoughtfully designed space is now available for mothers who desire to partner with one of our midwives to deliver their baby naturally.

The newly opened Holistic Birth Place at Nebraska Medical Center is ideal for families seeking a low-intervention, natural birth in a setting that feels more like home than in a hospital. Here, routines are softened, care is individualized and decisions are shared.

The private birthing suite features warm lighting, a spacious tub for labor or water birth and room for loved ones to be close by. Families are encouraged to move freely during labor, wear their own clothing and enjoy comfort measures like massage, aromatherapy, music and dim lighting.

Midwives and nurses guide care using the midwifery model, which emphasizes prevention, sensitivity, safety and appropriate medical support. Epidurals and IV pain relief are not used in this space, and interventions like Pitocin or inductions are not performed. Fetal monitoring is intermittent using a Doppler device unless continuous monitoring is medically indicated.

"Women who give birth in an in-hospital birth suite have essentially the best of both worlds," says Alyssa Fischer, nurse midwife. "You have an opportunity to have an unmedicated, undisturbed birth. But then, also, if an emergency happens, we have the resources to move our patients to keep them safe."

"What I love about the Holistic Birth Place is that it truly offers a peaceful, supportive environment for families looking to experience physiologic birth, with the reassurance that specialized care is close by if it's needed. It's about helping families feel both safe and empowered," says Medical Director of Labor and Delivery, Rebecca Rimsza, MD.

Criteria The Holistic Birth Place is designed for healthy, low-risk pregnancies. To ensure safety, families must meet certain criteria, including:

- Carrying one baby in the head-down position.
- Reaching full term (typically 37 weeks or more).
- No chronic health conditions or pregnancy complications.
- No more than one prior cesarean birth.
 - Our providers with Nebraska Medical Center have a very high success rate with vaginal birth after a C-section (VBAC).

Educational classes are required to help families prepare mentally, physically and emotionally. If you're unsure whether you qualify for childbirth in the Holistic Birth Place, your prenatal care provider can help guide you.



What to expect Families who choose this model of care often describe their experience as calm, joyful and empowering. Research shows excellent outcomes, including:

- Lower rates of cesarean sections.
- Fewer medical interventions.
- High levels of satisfaction.
- Safe outcomes for both parent and baby.

Visitors are welcome: up to four guests plus a doula may be present, and siblings are invited to share in the experience.

"Some of the best births that I've experienced have involved families and had children present," Fischer says. "I think it can be a really great bonding experience for families."

After birth, families have the option to go home early, typically within six to 12 hours.

The idea for the birth suite came from both patient requests and the midwives' philosophy of care. Many families asked for a birth suite option, and the midwife team wanted to create a space that matched their approach to childbirth.

"As midwives, our philosophy of care is focused on undisturbed, normal physiologic birth," she says. "We wanted to be able to provide lower intervention options for our patients."

"It is an honor to partner with the midwife group to provide family-centered delivery and newborn care at the Holistic Birth Place, says Ann Anderson-Berry, MD, PhD, medical director, Neonatal ICU and UNMC division chief, Neonatology. "This collaboration ensures that families can welcome their newborns in a comfortable, low-intervention environment with trusted providers—supported by the full resources of our delivery center. Nebraska Medicine's investment in this unique offering reflects a strong commitment to advancing care for our community."

To learn more or determine eligibility and to schedule a meet and greet, contact the nurse midwives at the Olson Center for Women's Health at 402.559.4500. If you choose to move forward, you'll begin prenatal care with the midwife team, who will be with you every step of the way.

Contributed by **Kara Haworth, MHA**
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olsoncenter.com

Welcome **Candace Giles, DO** to the Olson Center for Women's Health



Candace Giles, DO completed her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine in Athens, Ohio. She completed her Internship at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Womack Army Medical Center in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Dr. Giles served as a U.S. Army flight surgeon for the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade in Fort Bragg and later as an attending physician at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii. There, she led multidisciplinary teams as obstetric service chief, caring for a diverse patient population. She also taught residents and medical students - a passion she later continued at Creighton University School of Medicine.

Her professional interests include diversity in medicine, improving access to care, decreasing health disparities and health policy advocacy. She is especially focused on hypertension and preeclampsia, Black maternal health, fibroid treatment options, abnormal uterine bleeding and care for patients experiencing perimenopause and menopause.

Outside of work, Dr. Giles enjoys spending time with her husband, Johnathan, and their three children — Zora, Zane and Zoey (the three Z's). She loves live music, theater and exploring great restaurants.

We are so thrilled to welcome Dr. Giles to the Olson Center team!

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