



# Women's Health Overview

## Water Birth Makes a Splash

The day is finally here: the day you will meet your baby. Stepping into the warm water, you note the feeling of relief and comfort. After minutes, hours, or perhaps days of intense labor, you can relax as your baby moves downward into your pelvis. You are excited knowing your months of pregnancy are almost at an end. Reaching down with your hand, you can start to feel your baby's head crowning; the feeling is almost unbelievable. The support people you chose are nearby, encouraging and helping you feel empowered and safe. Emotions and relief begin to swirl as you finally birth your baby into the warm water and bring them up to your chest. Then you breathe deeply, taking in the sight of and cuddling your newborn baby for the first time.

This story is familiar to many women who have had the unique and recent opportunity to give birth in the water at Nebraska Medical Center. For others, it may instill a sense of curiosity or longing to experience this type of delivery, whether it is their first pregnancy or otherwise. Water birth refers to immersion in warm water during the birthing process so that the baby is born completely underwater. Although water birth dates back to the 1800s, many in the general public were and are unaware of the benefits water immersion can provide

for newborns and mothers alike. Current research across multiple studies and publications supports water therapy immersion during labor and birth.

Through the years, water birth has undoubtedly become more popular in the obstetric world, and many women are becoming more allured by the idea of giving birth in the water. The American College of Nurse Midwives, the representative body for certified nurse midwives, cites that utilization rates of immersion hydrotherapy in the United States, among midwifery-led programs, have increased to upwards of 64% in recent years, with up to 31% of those women using water therapy during birth itself. Our midwives in particular, have worked to offer water birth to their pregnant patients who meet eligibility criteria for a water birth under trained providers who deliver at the Nebraska Medical Center.

What led to this recent uptick in water births? Quite simply, as more and more research was published and public opinion shifted, Nebraska Medicine began screening its patient population for desires, requests, and feedback. In doing so, we identified an increased desire for water births. This call for more accessible water

see [Water birth](#) pg. 4

## Benefits of Water Birth

Water birth has been shown to have health benefits for newborns and mothers in ideal conditions.

Numerous studies have identified water immersion in labor and birth as a suitable pain management tool that provides a nonpharmacological option — meaning fewer epidurals — to healthy, low-risk women while not compromising their safety.

Other benefits for women include decreased risk of having a vaginal tear or laceration at delivery, shorter labor and less augmentation, higher maternal satisfaction, decreased anxiety, and improved relaxation and mobility for laboring persons.

As far as the babies themselves, evidence shows that babies born in water have decreased rates of hypothermia, decreased difficulty with breathing after birth, and decreased risk of neonatal intensive care unit admissions. In fact, newborn outcomes for those born in water are very similar to those born on land.



# From the Chairman

On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson traveled to The Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, to sign the legislation that created the Medicare and Medicaid programs. With the stroke of the presidential pen, LBJ transformed health care in the United States. This is in sharp contrast to July 5, 1948, when the British National Health Service began in Great Britain. Certainly, the latter was a much more comprehensive and inclusive program for all citizens than Medicare and Medicaid. It regrettably points out yet another difference between health care in the U.S. and the rest of the developed world. We spend more on health care than other countries, with less to show for it. We continue to reward health care delivery systems for volume rather than quality. Although the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, has invested in value-based reimbursement, this has not significantly improved quality metrics. Until this changes, it will likely continue to lag behind Western Europe in important quality measures.

In this issue of our publication, we are pleased to introduce you to the newest members of our care team. We are happy to expand our ability to provide care to our patients. The reestablishment of our Urogynecology Division is particularly noteworthy. The Olson Center is proud of the spectrum of services we provide, from water births of low-risk newborns to complex pelvic surgery.

## Women's Health overview

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Carl V. Smith, MD, FACOG

Chairman, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
College of Medicine  
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# research news

## Newly funded research projects in the Olson Center for Women's Health

**Michele Plewes, PhD, and So-Youn Kim, PhD, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, were recently awarded grants from the University of Nebraska Collaboration Initiative.** Funding is provided by the Nebraska Research Initiative, a State of Nebraska allocation to the University of Nebraska intended to spur faculty research innovation across the four University of Nebraska campuses. The awards are competitively funded and based on merit, irrespective of campus.

**Dr. Michele Plewes, assistant professor, will lead the project, "SREBF1/2 Signaling in Granulosa Cells: Steroidogenesis, Lipid Metabolism and Mitochondrial Function."** This project involves collaborative efforts by faculty in multiple departments at UNMC, including John S. Davis, PhD (OB-GYN), Zeljka Korade, DVM, PhD (Pediatrics), Micah Schott, PhD (Biochemistry), and Oleh Khalimonchuk, PhD at the Redox Biology Center at University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL).

The long-term objectives of this research are to determine the primary processes underlying the development of high-quality ovarian follicles and to identify essential lipid signaling pathways for efficient

steroid hormone synthesis. This project is significant because infertility poses significant challenges, negatively impacting individuals, couples, and societies on physical, emotional and economic levels. Dysregulation of steroid hormones plays a crucial role in this complex issue. The SREBF signaling pathway controls lipid synthesis and is emerging as a promising therapeutic target in numerous pathological conditions, including fatty liver disease, heart disease, obesity and metabolic syndrome. This pathway is also essential for the production of steroid hormones by the ovary. Disruptions in ovarian function profoundly impact fertility, making this a critical focus for investigating the molecular underpinnings of infertility.

**The second project, "Understanding the Protective Effect of VEGFA on Ovarian Vasculature Against Chemotherapy Toxicity," is led by Dr. So-Youn Kim, associate professor.** The overarching aim of this project is to develop strategies that safeguard ovarian function in women who are being treated with chemotherapies, which are known to have very harmful side effects on the ovary. Dr. Kim and her collaborator at UNL, Andrea Cupp, PhD, believe that this research could ultimately enhance the

well-being of over 400,000 reproductive-aged women who have a history of cancer.

This proposal's immediate objective is to assemble a crucial dataset, laying the foundation for a competitive extramural funding proposal focused on preventing damage to blood vessels in the ovary. The investigators seek to assess the impact of chemotherapeutic agents on the ovarian vasculature and to identify the mechanisms and approaches that counteract chemotherapy-induced damage. The investigative team hopes to identify unique signal transduction pathways that threaten the ovarian vasculature during chemotherapy. This research study is anticipated to pave the way for a novel therapeutic approach aimed at preventing ovarian damage caused by chemotherapy, thereby enhancing the quality of life for female cancer survivors of reproductive age.

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



**Water birth** continued from pg. 1

birthing in the region, contrasted with its generally limited access, led passionate certified nurse midwives at Nebraska Medical Center to launch its water birth program. This launch was a significant undertaking that not only considered patient desires, but also required midwives to increase buy-in from and further educate hospital staff and providers. It has been nearly a year since the initiation of the water birth program at the Nebraska Medical Center, and already, women are taking advantage of this new opportunity for undisturbed, less-traumatic birth in a hospital setting. As registered nurse Louise Geoff states, "You are reminded of how beautiful and peaceful birth can be."

Ideal candidates for water birth include women who have healthy, one-baby pregnancies that are head down at term, meaning 37 weeks of pregnancy or beyond. Of note, while women given intravenous pitocin during labor or having a

history of low transverse cesarean section would typically be denied access to a water birth, they are given the unique possibility of doing so at Nebraska Medical Center, where they can provide continuous fetal monitoring underwater.

For women or families considering water birth, it is important to seek a provider who is familiar with the process and offers it as a safe delivery method. Importantly, the final call on whether or not to move forward with water birth should include shared decision-making with your provider to determine your eligibility for a water birth. For more questions on water births at the Nebraska Medical Center, or if you are considering this option for your family, please contact the Olson Center for Women's Health at 402.559.4500.

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Contributed by **Alyssa Fischer, APRN-CNM**  
*Olson Center for Women's Health  
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## Four new physicians to join the Olson Center for Women's Health

The Olson Center for Women's Health is excited to welcome four new physicians this summer, each bringing unique skills and expertise. Join us in extending a warm welcome to Ashley Greenwood, MD, Neil Hamill, MD, Isuzu Meyer, MD and Sydney Randall, MD.

**Dr. Greenwood** is a gynecologic oncologist, originally from Omaha. She completed her medical degree at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and her residency in OB-GYN at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, followed by a gynecologic oncology fellowship at the University of Colorado Health in Aurora, Colorado.

**Dr. Hamill** joins the maternal-fetal medicine team in July. Dr. Hamill completed his medical degree and residency in OB-GYN from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City, Kansas. He then completed a fellowship in maternal-fetal medicine at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, Michigan. His areas of interest include diagnostic imaging with a focus on the fetal heart and congenital anomalies.

**Dr. Meyer** is a urogynecologist. Dr. Meyer earned her medical degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and completed her residency in OB-GYN at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. She then completed a three-year subspecialty fellowship training in urogynecology and reconstructive pelvic surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Dr. Randall** is a general OB-GYN and will join our team after she completes her residency at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, where she also received her medical degree. Dr. Randall's medical interests include gynecology and breastfeeding, and she enjoys surgical and in-office procedures.

### *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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## Summer Food Safety

Summer is finally here! In the hustle and bustle of these busy months, don't dismiss the importance of food safety. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year, 1 in 6 Americans get sick from contaminated food or beverages, and 3,000 die from foodborne illnesses. The most common symptoms of food poisoning are diarrhea, stomach pain or cramps, nausea, vomiting and fever. Following some simple tips will help keep you and your family safe from foodborne illness.

### **Make sure to pack your food safely when eating outside.**

This means to keep your cold food cold and your hot food hot. Keep your food out of the "danger zone," which is above 40 °F and below 140 °F. This is the temperature range when bacteria grow quickly in food and lead to foodborne illness. Using insulated coolers filled with several inches of ice or enough ice packs to keep your food below 40 degrees is important. Replace melted ice as needed to keep your temperature right. Keeping your beverages in a separate cooler from your chilled food helps as the beverage cooler will be opened often, letting warm air in. Ice that will be used for beverages should be kept in a sealed zip-lock bag to avoid unwanted germs or bacteria. Place coolers in the shade when possible, and avoid leaving them in a hot car. If packing a lunch for summer camp, consider including foods that don't need to be refrigerated, such as fresh or canned fruits and vegetables, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Frozen juice boxes and water bottles work well as ice packs to keep your sack lunch cool and will be thawed and ready to drink by lunchtime. Wrap your foods securely or use proper storage containers until ready to serve. This will keep your foods safe from bacteria and unwanted bugs. Always wash your fresh produce at home before packing.

**When grilling, keep your raw meats separate from all other foods.** Always wash your hands before and after handling raw meat. Check your meat with a thermometer to ensure you cook it thoroughly to a safe temperature. When serving your cooked meat, make sure to use a clean plate. Never use the same plate

for your cooked meat as you did for the raw meat. This is also true for spatulas, cutting boards and other cooking utensils. This is called cross-contamination. Do not reuse marinades that were used for raw meat. This is an easy way to transport raw meat juices and contaminate other foods.

### **Safe Meat Grilling Temperatures**

*(obtained from the CDC)*

145°F	pork
145°F	fish
160°F	hamburgers and other ground meat
165°F	poultry

**Don't overlook the importance of properly washing your hands often while outside.** Before eating, wash them with clean, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizers with an alcohol content of at least 60 percent work well if you don't have running water.

**Make sure to wash and sanitize all picnic tables and surfaces where you will be placing your food.** According to the Food and Drug Administration, food should not be left out more than two hours, or one hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90 °F. Bacteria thrive in hot, humid weather. Refrigerate leftovers in small, covered containers and thoroughly reheat cooked foods. Remember, food doesn't have to smell or look bad to be spoiled and make you sick. Always check and be mindful of expiration dates on your food. If unsure of how long something has been out, follow this old saying "When in doubt throw it out!" It's not worth getting sick.

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Contributed by **Jaime Stevens, RD, LMNT**  
*Olson Center for Women's Health at Nebraska Medicine*



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## Mark your calendars for upcoming events

### Huntington's Disease: Current Approaches and Future Directions

Olson Center & UNMC College of Nursing Webinar Series

Tues., August 13 at 12 p.m. CDT, online through Zoom

Presenter: Amy Hellman, MD

Associate Professor, UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences

This event is open to everyone, nursing credit is available at no cost. For more information or to register, please call 402.559.6618.



**Friday, Oct. 25, 2024**

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m

*New Location!*

**Scott Conference Center**

6450 Pine Street  
Omaha, Nebraska

A day of education for the community. Continuing education will be provided for nurses and social workers.

Visit [OmahaWomensHealthAndWellness.com](http://OmahaWomensHealthAndWellness.com) or call the Olson Center for Women's Health at 402.559.6345 or for more information.

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