



NEWS RELEASE

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ACNM ENCOURAGES WOMEN TO TREAT THEMSELVES TO THE GIFT OF GOOD HEALTH THIS VALENTINE'S DAY
Take five easy steps to better your health this year

Silver Spring, MD – The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is asking all women to be their own special Valentines this year and take five strides toward improving their health.

“The term ‘midwife’ literally means ‘with woman’,” explains Tina Johnson, CNM, MS, director of professional practice and health policy for ACNM. “As midwives, we encourage women to listen to their bodies and to take pro-active steps. Women play a vital role in their own health care, just like their providers. When women take care of themselves first, they feel motivated to share their healthy behaviors with their loved ones.”

Midwives care for women throughout their entire lifetimes – not just during pregnancy. With that in mind, ACNM offers the following tips for women from adolescence to menopause and beyond.

- **Start with the heart:** Heart disease is the number-one killer of women in the United States. Fortunately, you can work with your health care provider to create a diet and exercise plan that is right for you. “We cannot control risk factors such as gender, age and ethnicity,” Johnson says. “But we can control what we eat and how often we exercise. Your midwife can provide you with the latest information on how to prevent heart disease.”
- **Schedule an annual gynecologic exam:** A visit to your midwife will include a Pap smear, physical exam and a breast exam. Early detection of breast cancer and the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is known to cause cervical cancers, is essential for a woman’s health.
- **Take charge of your reproductive health:** Even before a woman thinks about pregnancy, she should begin to take steps to prepare her body. Good nutrition and attention to weight gain are key factors to a healthy pregnancy and a healthy life. “If you don’t know the source of the food, you probably shouldn’t

be eating it,” advises Johnson. “Women should try to eat foods that aren’t heavily processed. For example, a boneless, skinless chicken breast is better than chicken nuggets, particularly because the food is easily identified. Women can use the same rationale when preparing food for their families. A handful of blueberries is healthier than a blueberry muffin. “

- **Get tested for HIV:** In America, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. Your midwife can provide an HIV test, in addition to pre and post-test counseling which can include treatment options and prevention strategies for those who test positive. Many clinics and testing locations offer free HIV tests; search <http://hivtest.org/> for a testing site near your home or office.
- **Learn more about midwifery:** Midwives provide primary and gynecologic care to women, as well as prenatal and delivery services. Certified nurse midwives attended 317,168 births in 2006 – a 33 % increase since 1996. Visit <http://www.midwife.org/find.cfm> to find a midwife to care for you.

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With roots dating to 1929, the American College of Nurse-Midwives is the oldest women's health care association in the U.S. ACNM's mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and infants within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. More information about ACNM can be found at www.midwife.org.

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