

CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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C-Section versus Vaginal Births: What Is the Safest?

Posted On: March 26, 2010 by [Patrick A. Malone](#)

The rate of C-section births in the United States has been increasing every year since 1996 for women of all ages and racial and ethnic groups, and now the procedure is the most common operation in the country. In 2007 alone, 1.4 million Caesareans were performed, representing 32 percent of all births. However, although C-sections can be life-saving in some instances, experts are concerned with the ever-increasing number of the procedures, [reports Denise Grady of the New York Times](#).

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Joining other critics, Dr. George Macones, spokesman for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, is worried that the rise in number of C-sections “is not going to be good for anybody.” The procedure, a costly major surgery, poses health risks to the mother as well as the baby:

Risks to the mother increase with each subsequent Caesarean, because the surgery raises the odds that the uterus will rupture in the next pregnancy, an event that can be life-threatening for both the mother and the baby.

Caesareans also increase the risk of dangerous abnormalities in the placenta during later pregnancies, which can cause hemorrhaging and lead to a hysterectomy. Repeated Caesareans can make it risky or even impossible to have a large family.

The new report notes that Caesareans also pose a risk of surgical complications and are more likely than normal births to cause problems that put the mother back in the hospital and the infant in an intensive-care unit.

According to Grady, the reason for the rising popularity of the procedure is manifold: doctors fearful of malpractice liability should babies be born injured with vaginal delivery; women requesting the procedure even when it’s not medically warranted, not understanding its risks; increased tendency to induce labor for reasons of convenience. Also, many hospitals have banned vaginal births for women who have had Caesareans, adhering to the obstetricians’ college’s guidelines.

In light of the many risks of Caesareans, expecting mothers should educate themselves about their delivery options and consult their doctors to decide whether the procedure is medically necessary.

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The bottom line is to find the best way to ensure the baby's health. Sometimes that is with vaginal delivery, but sometimes not. In our law firm's practice, for example, we have represented several families whose children suffered terrible injuries because the mother's uterus ruptured during a VBAC delivery (Vaginal Birth After Caesarean), and all of those mothers would have skipped the effort at vaginal birth if they had known the risk of catastrophe.

Our firm's website has extensive information about birth injuries [here](#) and [here](#).

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