

## How to Avoid a Cesarean Section

By Dr. Angela English, DC

About 1 in 3 pregnancies end up in Cesarean, adding up to almost 1 million performed each year. What is contributing to all these pregnancies ending in a c-section more frequently? Are there really that many high risk pregnancies occurring or are there other reasons behind such and increase in C-section rates?

In the last decade, the number of C-Sections performed went up 53%. C-Sections have usually been done in cases where the baby or mom is under distress, when the baby is not in an optimal position, or if the baby is too large for the birth canal. Lately, there seems to be less patience for childbirth. Doctors don't want to wait long hours for the labor to progress and there is a much bigger threat of getting sued than there was 10 years ago. What is even scarier is that moms are choosing to have a c-section performed more for convenience, regardless of needing one or not. A c-section is a significant abdominal surgery and cost twice as much as a vaginal birth. Those that undergo a c-section have a longer time needed for recovery and have a great chance of losing blood, having a reaction to the anesthesia and an increased chance of infection.

There are several increase risk factors that can affect the baby when a c-section is performed. Often times babies have a premature birth since they are almost always scheduled a week before the actual due date. They can have digestive problems and colic since they don't get the normal flora that a baby would receive from the mom when traveling through the birth canal. They have a risk of birth trauma since the baby has to be pulled out of the mother's womb, which often times can result in Torticollis and Brachial plexus injuries. Infants tend to have lower APGAR scores that can be due to the anesthesia. Traveling through the birth canal also stimulates several reflexes for the start of life outside the womb and is harder for the baby to jumpstart life without stimulation of those reflexes.

Some important steps can be done by expecting moms to avoid needing a c-section. First of all nutrition should be addressed. Before pregnancy it is a great idea to do a liver detoxification to flush out toxins stored in the fat so fewer toxins will be taken up by the fetus. There are key nutrients such as folic acid that the fetus needs in the first 2 weeks of development that will prevent Spina Bifida, a neurological spinal development disorder were the spinal column does not fully close along the back and can leave the spinal cord exposed. Hormone levels should also be checked prior to pregnancy. Low levels of progesterone are often linked to miscarriages and can lead to problems throughout pregnancy.

It is also a good idea to exercise prior to conception and to keep as active as comfortable throughout the pregnancy, unless otherwise instructed by a doctor. This lowers the risk of gestational diabetes, swelling in the ankles and gaining too much weight. Exercise also helps in reducing stress which can greatly affect a pregnancy by keeping the uterus less contracted or restrictive on the baby. Yoga during pregnancy can be very important, especially if mom has to sit a lot throughout the day. Long term, repetitive sitting can cause contractor of the psoas muscle. This muscle goes through the abdominal cavity and can cause the baby to go into a breech position. This muscle can also be balanced by health professionals such as physical therapists, massage therapists and chiropractors. Another tissue involved in breech positions is the broad ligament. This ligaments acts like a hammock for the uterus and fetus. This is very important to get checked during pregnancy, especially during the third trimester, even when the baby is in the proper position. When this ligament is unbalanced, the baby is more likely to turn during delivery and therefore become more likely to need a c-section. This ligament can be adjusted by trained chiropractors using the Webster Technique.

There are many more options today for women during pregnancy. Not all deliveries need to be done in a hospital. Working with a midwife and a doula (a birth coach) can make delivery as easy on your body and the babies as possible. There are also several birth centers in the area which allow your midwife, doula and other professionals to work directly with OBGYN's and MD's, so that the best care can be given. Using a midwife can also allow you to be able to deliver your baby at home. With all of these options, it is very important for you to do your research, education yourself and make the best plan that you feel comfortable

with. Starting early with getting your body as healthy as possible and continuing that process throughout pregnancy is the most effective ways to ensure a reduced risk of needing a c-section.