

# Women's Health **UPDATE**

## What Women Should Know About C-Sections

(NAPSA)—Women who are concerned about safely delivering healthy babies may want to find out more about the long-term implications of having a cesarean or C-section.

“Cesarean section remains one of the most frequently performed surgical procedures in this country, but the majority of pregnant women do not experience medical complications that would justify a cesarean section. Perplexingly, the C-section rate continues to rise year after year,” said Katherine Carr, CNM, Ph.D., president of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM). “Women need unbiased individualized information concerning their birth options.”

A HealthGrades study found a 20 percent increase in C-sections between 1999 and 2001. The increase in elective C-sections may be attributed to fear of litigation, a lack of understanding about the science of C-sections and a false sense of security about the risks and/or benefits of surgery.

“The increase in the Caesarean births is due to three things—malpractice, malpractice, malpractice,” said Dr. Joshua A. Copel, director of Maternal and Fetal Medicine at Yale University School of Medicine, according to a recent HealthDay.com report.

In 2004, 29.1 percent of all reported births were delivered by cesarean section, a new record high. Also of concern to many is that the rate of vaginal births after cesarean (VBAC) has declined from 31 percent in 1998 to just 9.2 in 2004. At the same time, newly published reports in *The New England Journal of Medicine* demonstrate that VBACs hold very low risks for women with less than 1 percent experi-



**Getting up and walking during labor decreases the incidence of cesarean sections.**

encing complications.

According to a recent article in *USA Today*, many women who have been denied the right to have a VBAC feel that they are being denied their reproductive rights.

ACNM is concerned about the long-term consequences of cesarean sections including the significant risks that accompany subsequent surgeries.

The presence of certified nurse-midwives may help reduce the rate of cesarean sections. Nurse-midwives at the Plainfield Health Center in New Jersey helped lower the rate of C-sections to 22 percent, which is lower than the state average of 33.1 percent. The midwives worked with the patients to minimize potential complications, such as premature labor. Such interventions resulted in lower costs and better health outcomes for mother and newborn.

ACNM, the oldest women's health care association in the U.S., is asking Congress to explore these issues as part of their oversight role on public health matters, along with the question of the overall economic costs cesarean sections have on the delivery of obstetrical care. For more information, visit [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org).