

National Statistics for 2002:  
**Cesarean Rate Rises to Highest Ever Reported  
in the United States – 26.1%**

The National Center for Health Statistics released preliminary data for births in the U.S. for 2002 (June 2003). You can read the press release and find a link for the entire document at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/03news/lowbirth.htm>. According to the report:

- **More than one fourth of all children born in 2002 were delivered by cesarean;** the total cesarean delivery rate of **26.1 percent** was **the highest level ever reported** in the United States. The cesarean delivery rate declined during the late 1980s through the mid-1990s but has been on the rise since 1996.
- **The number of cesarean births to women with no previous cesarean birth jumped 7%.**
- **The rate of vaginal births after previous cesarean delivery (VBACs) dropped 23%.**

**Has this resulted in better outcomes for mothers and babies? NO!**

- **Infant Mortality:** The US ranks **28<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality** among industrialized nations (behind the Czech Republic and Cuba) as of 1998 (most recent numbers available). (*Child Health USA 2002*, Maternal Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services [http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa02/main\\_pages/page\\_03.htm](http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa02/main_pages/page_03.htm))
- **Maternal Mortality:** In 1999, the US ranked **21<sup>st</sup> in the world for maternal death**. However the CDC estimates that **maternal deaths are underreported by one half to two thirds**, and that **half of US maternal deaths are preventable**. The rate of death due to childbirth has not decreased since 1982, and increased in 1999. (*Ina May's Guide to Childbirth*. Ina May Gaskin. Bantam, 2003. pp 274-277)

**What is a reasonable cesarean section rate? Only 10 to 15%!**

"... the World Health Organization concluded that ... there was **no justification for any region to have a cesarean rate more than 10 to 15 percent** (58). As for midwives, in looking at six studies of hospital-based midwives, all but one study reported rates of 10 percent or less, while of 29 studies **of midwives attending births outside of the hospital, none reported a cesarean rate over seven percent** (20)." (*Cesarean section: What you need to know*. Henci Goer [www.parentsplace.com/print/0,,241096,00.html](http://www.parentsplace.com/print/0,,241096,00.html))

The **Midwives Model of Care** has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth injury, trauma and cesarean section.