



POSITION STATEMENT

VBAC – Labor & Birth after Cesarean

WHEREAS, it is AABC's position that:

- Birth is a life changing experience for families, with consequences that can last throughout the lifetime of the parent and child.
- Pregnant and childbearing families have the right to make safe choices for birth.
- In the case of a person who has had a previous cesarean section (cesarean birth/c-section), the options for childbirth include vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) or a repeat cesarean birth.
- AABC joins numerous other health care organizations in supporting safe access to VBAC.
- VBAC benefits include:
 - For the pregnant person: lower mortality rate (less chance of dying from the procedure); lower rates of severe complications such as thromboembolism (blood clot), amniotic fluid embolism, and placenta percreta (in which the placenta grows through the uterine wall).
 - For the infant: lower rates of respiratory distress
 - For society: lower cost to the health care system.
- Cesarean section is major surgery.
- VBAC risks to the parent and infant include:
 - For the pregnant person: hemorrhage (dangerous and excessive bleeding), uterine rupture.
 - For the infant: fetal death (for example, due to uterine rupture).
- The right of childbearing people *with* a history of cesarean birth to make safe birth choices should be the same as the right of childbearing people *without* a history of cesarean birth to make safe choices for subsequent births.
- Lack of access to VBAC in a supportive hospital environment is an ongoing concern in many areas of the U.S. This is one factor that leads some families to choose a birth center for their VBAC.
 - Lack of access covers many factors and includes state regulations, hospitals with institutional guidelines precluding VBAC, or hospitals with restrictive non-evidence based guidelines for VBAC. VBAC bans are also present in many hospitals.
 - Fifteen states specifically forbid out-of-hospital VBAC and other locations may place restrictions on place of birth or type of provider.
- AABC supports the rights of birth centers to choose to offer VBAC to appropriate candidates.

THEREFORE, it is AABC's position that:

- Informed decision-making (attaining a full understanding of harms and benefits involved in VBAC and in repeat c-section) is crucial for families considering VBAC.
- For those considering VBAC in a birth center, it is important to understand that while absolute risks are low, risks in a birth center setting are higher for people with previous cesareans than for people without previous cesareans, and also are higher than for those with prior cesareans laboring in hospitals.
- Pregnant people and their families must have access to information in a format they can understand, and must be able to discuss this information with their care provider(s).
- AABC strongly supports VBAC in a supportive environment. Ongoing data collection and research are essential in the effort to weigh benefits and harms of vaginal birth after cesarean in community settings (i.e., in a birth center or at home).

Approved by AABC Board of Directors: 5.10.2019