



# POSITION STATEMENT

## ELECTIVE PRIMARY CESAREAN SECTION

Elective primary cesarean section has recently been proposed as a substitute for vaginal birth. Elective primary cesarean section is major abdominal surgery in a healthy woman for the birth of a baby, when there is no medical, fetal, or obstetric reason for the surgery. It is the position of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) that this practice is not supported by scientific evidence.

The cesarean rate in the country in 2004 has increased to 29.1% of all births, the highest rate ever reported in the United States. This escalation in the cesarean rate is driven by both the rise in the primary cesarean rate and the decline in the vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) rate. No corresponding improvements in neonatal or maternal outcome measures have been reported.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives:

- Recognizes that, after review of the scientific data, the safety and efficacy of elective primary cesarean section as a substitute for vaginal birth has not been established. There is no convincing evidence to endorse this change in practice and there is concern for harm.
- Identifies vaginal birth as the optimal mode of birth for women and their babies. Cesarean section is valued as a surgical procedure used to decrease morbidity and mortality in specific clinical situations.
- Supports women's right to accurate, balanced and complete information regarding the risks and benefits of both vaginal birth and cesarean section.
- Promotes decision-making about mode of delivery that is evidence based and not unduly influenced by factors such as liability, convenience or economics.
- Supports further research to evaluate the short and long-term medical, psychosocial, economic and cultural sequelae for mothers, babies, including future pregnancies associated with elective primary cesarean section.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives therefore, identifies vaginal birth as the optimal mode of birth for women who do not have a health indication for cesarean section.

References:

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\* Midwifery as used throughout this document refers to the education and practice of certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) who have been certified by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) or the American Midwifery Certification Board, Inc. (AMCB), formerly the American College of Nurse Midwives Certification Council, Inc. (ACC).

Source: Board of Directors  
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