

## ICAN<sup>SM</sup>—Making A Difference

### LOCAL CHAPTERS

Throughout the United States, Canada and other countries, women receive the mother-to-mother support they need to avoid unnecessary major surgery, recover from surgical birth and plan their upcoming births at local chapter meetings each month.

### THE CLARION

Since its founding in 1982, ICAN<sup>SM</sup> has published a quarterly newsletter on cesarean prevention, recovery and VBAC, with articles on birthing trends and personal stories.

### WEBSITE

The award-winning ICAN website located at [www.ican-online.org](http://www.ican-online.org) has easy access to detailed information and research on pregnancy and birth options, including women's rights as patients. It also has an online bookstore stocked with educational materials and links to our online support group.

### BIANNUAL CONFERENCE

ICAN organizes and hosts an international conference in odd-numbered years where mothers and childbirth professionals meet to learn and share about the latest trends in cesareans and VBAC.

### CESAREAN AWARENESS MONTH



Each April is observed with special activities designed to bring public awareness to the international epidemic of surgical birth and provide grassroots ideas to make change on the local level. The inverted burgundy ribbon is the symbol of cesarean awareness.

### OUTREACH

We respond daily to inquiries from consumers, care providers and the media who want information on cesarean issues through our toll-free hotline. We collaborate with other organizations involved in childbirth to improve maternal and child health. Online support groups provide a forum for thousands of women who are healing from cesareans and preparing for birth after cesarean. A regular online newsletter provides up-to-the-minute news on issues affecting the ICAN<sup>SM</sup> mission.

International Cesarean Awareness Network<sup>SM</sup> Inc. (ICAN<sup>SM</sup>)

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*Do you know how to  
avoid a cesarean?  
Find out.*



## WHO ARE WE?

The International Cesarean Awareness Network is a non-profit advocacy and support group whose mission is to improve maternal and child health by preventing unnecessary cesareans through education, providing support for cesarean recovery, and promoting vaginal birth. Every month we offer support and information to thousands of women through our main office, local chapters and e-mail support group. We provide evidence-based information, using the latest research, that is accessible for women and their care providers.

## SUPPORTING NORMAL BIRTH

Birth is a normal and natural process for a woman's body. Given quality emotional support, full information on birth options and care providers who trust the birth process, 90% to 95% (about 9 out of 10) of women can deliver their babies as nature intended, without the need for major surgery. Birth can and should be a time of empowerment, respect and joy. It is a chance for a woman to discover her body's strength and abilities.



ICAN supports women in finding out their rights and responsibilities regarding birth choices. Women are entitled to up-to-date, accurate information. It is every woman's responsibility to make fully informed decisions about her birth options. In order to make decisions, a woman needs to learn about her options from different sources, talk to her chosen care pro-

vider and fully understand the risks and benefits of each option before deciding what is right for her.

## CESAREANS ARE MAJOR SURGERY

Cesareans are the most common surgery for women in North America. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that there is no medical reason for a country to have cesarean rates over 10% to 15%. Across North America, cesarean rates in many hospitals are as high as 25% to 30% (many are over 40% and approaching 50%). According to WHO standards, over half of these cesarean surgeries are not medically necessary.

## CESAREAN INFORMATION

### Complications that are more likely with a cesarean than with a normal birth include:

#### Complications for mother:

- Death
- Hysterectomy
- Severe bleeding
- Infections
- Blood clots
- Injuries from surgery
- Going back into hospital
- Problems with scar tissue in body
- Depression and other negative feelings
- Chronic pelvic pain

- Infertility
- Ectopic pregnancy in future
- Placental problems in future pregnancies
- Uterine rupture in future pregnancies

#### Complications for baby:

- Lung problems
- Injuries from surgery
- Less likely to breast-feed
- Prematurity
- Asthma and allergies

A cesarean can be lifesaving for mother and baby, but it is major surgery with all its risks. When a cesarean is truly lifesaving, the benefits outweigh the risks of major surgery. However, with those that are not medically necessary, the risks to mother and baby far outweigh the benefits.

## AVOIDING A CESAREAN

- Educate yourself on your birth options and your rights.
- Choose a care provider who will respect your choices.
- Hire a doula or labor assistant.
- Encourage your baby to stay in the best positions for easier birth.
- Avoid induction except for clear medical reasons.
- Read lots of birth stories to get a feel for how different each labor is.
- Trust your body to birth your baby.
- Avoid common medical procedures that increase your chance of a cesarean.
- Go to an ICAN meeting for support.



## SUPPORTING ICAN

ICAN is an all-volunteer organization that relies on memberships and donations for funding. Your financial support helps ICAN provide free information and support for women like you. Membership is tax-deductible for most US taxpayers. Member benefits include our quarterly newsletter, *The Clarion*, and discounts at the ICAN online bookstore and conferences.