



# ICAN

International Cesarean  
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**For Immediate Release**

## **ICAN Urges Caution with Use of Cesarean Mothers Should Evaluate Risks before Agreeing to Surgery**

Redondo Beach, CA, March 20, 2005 – As casual use of cesarean surgery grows, the International Cesarean Awareness Network urges both doctors and mothers to reserve the procedure only for serious medical situations. The short-term and long-term risks of surgery to both mother and baby are significant. Yet as celebrities popularize elective cesareans and the obstetric community increasingly condones them, there is a growing perception that cesarean surgery is safer or easier than vaginal birth.

“There’s no way around it. That cut has consequences,” says Tonya Jamois, president of the International Cesarean Awareness Network. “Some women have no problems with their cesareans, but other women pay a high price for the surgery, sometimes throughout their entire reproductive lives.”

Risks of cesarean to the baby include low birth weight, prematurity, respiratory problems, and lacerations. Potential risks to women include hemorrhage, blood clots, infection, hysterectomy, surgical mistakes, re-hospitalization, dangerous placental abnormalities in future pregnancies, unexplained stillbirth in future pregnancies and increased chance of maternal death.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology states that performing a cesarean for no medical reason can be ethical as long as the mother is fully informed of the risks. “In listening to women all around the country, we know that the process of informed consent does not work well,” says Jamois. “Maybe the doctor is rushed, or maybe he or she just wants a compliant patient. Whatever the reason, we know that women, all too often, are not given the full picture of the risks they are taking when they agree to various medical interventions.” In addition to cesarean surgery, interventions like induction, epidural, artificial rupture of membranes, episiotomy carry the risk of adverse outcomes to both mother and baby.

ICAN works to improve maternal/infant health by heightening awareness of cesarean, its risks, and ways to avoid the procedure. Currently, the U.S. lags behind dozens of other industrialized nations in maternal/infant mortality and morbidity rates. ICAN cautions those participating in the upcoming NIH consensus meeting on elective cesarean to carefully evaluate the long-term impact that growing use of unnecessary surgery in healthy women and babies might have. “As the cesarean rate skyrocketed in the U.S., we’ve seen zero progress in improving the health of mothers and babies through childbirth. Opening the door to elective cesarean is likely only to cost more lives and cause more harm in the future.”

*ICAN recognizes that when a cesarean is medically necessary, it can be a lifesaving technique for both mother and baby, and worth the risks involved. ICAN is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve maternal-child health by preventing unnecessary cesareans through education, providing support for cesarean recovery and promoting vaginal birth after cesarean. There are 71 ICAN Chapters across North America, which hold education and support meetings for people interested in cesarean prevention and recovery. For more information, visit [www.ican-online.org](http://www.ican-online.org).*

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