

At Bartlett Regional Hospital, we strive to provide obstetrical services that ensure the safest possible delivery of healthy babies to healthy mothers. Our mission is to provide the highest possible quality obstetrical services to the women of southeast Alaska. We provide these services within both the expertise and limitations of our facility and staff, with patient safety as our primary objective in all that we do.

As many in our community know, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) published a position statement in August of 2010 discussing the benefits and risks of Vaginal Birth after Cesarean (VBAC).

Because of recent community interest, we have consulted with area physicians and carefully reviewed our VBAC policy. We have concluded that it is prudent to continue our current policy of **not** offering VBACs at Bartlett Regional Hospital.

We have reached this conclusion after extensive consideration of the position statement of ACOG, and discussion with our advisers who include Perinatologists (high risk OB specialists), pediatricians, and our risk management specialists.

It is important to note that ACOG's guidelines clearly require that trial of labor after cesarean section be undertaken in a facility that has immediate surgical and pediatric emergency services.

Bartlett Regional Hospital is a small community hospital, and as such, has excellent, but limited obstetrical and surgical services. We provide the entire community with surgical services that include emergency, general, and orthopedic surgeries. This also includes scheduled cesarean section deliveries, which, at 23 percent, represent a rate well below the national average of 32 percent. There is no neonatal intensive care unit at Bartlett.

Whereas the risks of serious complications during VBACs may not be statistically high, some of the potential complications are life-threatening to both mother and baby, and many are beyond the rapid response emergency capabilities of a community hospital the size of Bartlett.

There are several possible complications with VBAC: One potential risk of VBAC is rupture of the uterus. While the risk of uterine rupture is low...less than one percent...the potential outcomes can be catastrophic and can occur quickly. Time is critical in recognizing and managing this complication to prevent permanent brain damage to the baby, or death of the mother and/or baby. No one knows exactly how much elapsed time is acceptable, but we do know that delivery needs to occur in a matter of minutes. Bartlett does not have the benefit of anesthesiologists and surgical teams assigned exclusively to obstetrics, so every minute of delay could lead to severe complications.

Other risks include:

- Other permanent injury to baby
- Need for removal of mother's uterus (hysterectomy)
- Damage to mother's bowel or bladder
- Severe hemorrhage requiring blood transfusion to mother or baby
- Severe infection of mother or baby

ACOG's position states that there are no accurate predictors in labor for uterine rupture and if a facility cannot provide immediate emergency care, women should be referred to the closest

facility that can provide the services. For Juneau, the closest facilities are in Seattle or Anchorage to provide optimal safety for mother and baby in VBAC deliveries.

We understand that many women want VBACs. We also understand that relocating from home late in pregnancy is disruptive, but we fully support Juneau doctors who feel it is the safest option for women in Bartlett's service area wishing to attempt VBAC deliveries.

If a woman is considering VBAC delivery, we recommend that she and her doctor have a thorough discussion about it *early* in pregnancy. Not everyone is a good VBAC candidate and an early discussion can make planning the delivery in a larger hospital easier to facilitate. Discussing your options and risks with your doctor is critically important.

Bartlett Regional Hospital will continue to provide high quality obstetrical care. Our goal is to provide maximum safety for both mother and baby. We therefore encourage interested women to pursue VBAC at facilities where they can be performed in the safest possible fashion. Your physician will be more than happy to discuss other choices of facilities with you.