



C-section concerns

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COVER STORY

C-section numbers worrisome

Calgary's rate of baby deliveries via caesarean section is climbing steadily—a trend which is not necessarily ideal, according to some health professionals.

Statistics released in Calgary yesterday during the annual meeting of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, showed the rate of C-sections grew about one per cent each year between 2002 and 2006.

But the 28.3 per cent of Calgary women who give birth via C-section is a growing concern for some doctors who say natural, vaginal delivery poses fewer health risks for mothers.

The Calgary number is close to being on par with the national average, which shows showing more

than a quarter of pregnant women deliver babies via C-section — an all-time high in Canada.

Dr. Scott Farrell, incoming president of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said inclusion, bladder and uterus infections as well as blood clots leading to heart and lung problems are all risks associated with C-sections.

"Demographics including older women and obese women bearing children these days is one reason for the rise because they are more likely to have complications with their pregnancies," said Farrell.

"And the number of resources to support women in labour and during pregnancy is shrinking in Canada."

Farrell said a shortage of health

professionals make labour a more stressful event than it needs to be for some women, leading them to opt for a C-section halfway through their labour.

"What we need are the proper resources available to counsel women so the experience is more enjoyable and the outcome is good."

Dr. Colin Birch, head of obstetrics gynecology at the Foothills Hospital said nurses in particular are an extremely limited asset in Calgary.

"Labour and birth is in crisis in Calgary, there's no doubt," he said.

"But it's a stressful environment for nurses to work in and they don't get the sufficient support they need to stay."

Birch said that though C-sections are often deemed riskier than vaginal delivery, they're not the only way to experience complications.

— Jenna McMurray, 24 hours

National birth statistics

- In 2005, the average age of Canadian mothers at the birth of their children was 29.2 years, 2.5 years higher than in 1975.
- The rate of C-sections across the country is at an all-time high, with one in every four pregnant women delivering via the operation.
- The average age of Canadian women who underwent a C-section in 2005-06 was 30.4 years compared to 28.7 for women who gave birth naturally.
- Between one and two per cent of C-sections in Canada are performed at the request of the mom.
- More than 60 per cent of the children born in Canada each year are to mothers between the ages of 25 and 34, a demographic which has doubled its obesity rate since the early 90s.

— Courtesy of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada