

# Ideals vs. Reality in U.S. Births

## A BirthNet Fact Sheet

	WHO Recommendations*	CIMS Suggestions**	2003 US Statistics*** (4 million births total)
<b>Birth Attendants</b>	Midwives for normal pregnancy & birth	Access to professional midwifery care	Midwives 8% (328,000 births)
<b>Place of Birth</b>	Out of hospital preferred	Where mother prefers	Hospitals 99.1% (4.05 million births)
<b>Electronic Fetal Monitoring</b>	Not routine	Not routine	85.1% (3.3 million births)
<b>Pain Relief Drugs in Labor</b>	Not routine	Only for complications	80% <sup>1</sup>
<b>Induction of Labor</b>	10% or less	10% or less	20.5% (840,000 births)
<b>Stimulation of Labor</b>	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	15.8% (645,000 births)
<b>Episiotomies</b>	Systematic use not justified	Goal of 5%	26.9% <sup>2</sup> (780,000 births)
<b>Cesarean Rate</b>	10-15%	10-15%	27.5% (978,000 births)
<b>Breastfeeding After Birth</b>	Immediately	WHO-UNICEF BFHI**** guidelines	67% <sup>3</sup>

\* WHO Recommendations taken from a report on the *Appropriate Technology for Birth*, published by the World Health Organization in April 1985.

\*\* CIMS Suggestions taken from *The Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative* from the Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS), 1996, [www.motherfriendly.org](http://www.motherfriendly.org).

\*\*\* 2003 U.S. Statistics: Most taken from *Births: Final Data for 2003*, National Vital Statistics Report Vol. 54, No. 2, September 8, 2005. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54\\_02.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf).

\*\*\*\* BFHI = Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

<sup>1</sup> *Listening to Mothers Report*, October 2002, p. 18

<sup>2</sup> "National Hospital Discharge Survey 2002: Annual Summary with detailed diagnosis and procedure data," *Vital Health Statistics*, Series 13, No. 158, March 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *Mothering Magazine*, No. 112, May/June 2002.



**BirthNet**

Educating the public to improve  
maternity care for all women

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