

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Birth Data for 2002 Shows Disturbing Trends**

BirthNet is alarmed that the Preliminary Birth Data for 2002, released by the National Center for Health Statistics, shows disturbing trends in maternity care that hold serious dangers for mothers and babies. The report is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/03news/lowbirth.htm>.

In 2002, the cesarean birth rate skyrocketed to an all time high of 26.1%, meaning that over 1 million women gave birth by major abdominal surgery. The vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) rate dropped 23% in one year from 16.4% in 2001 to 12.7% in 2002. This holds risks not only for the mothers and babies at the time of surgery, but also for subsequent pregnancies and births. Furthermore, despite an increase in early prenatal care, the rates of both preterm birth (12.0%) and low birth weight babies (7.8%) continue their climb and are at an all time high.

New York State's statistics are also troubling. The cesarean rate for New York climbed to 27.2%, again well above the national average. The rate of low birth weight babies also increased and is slightly above the national average at 7.9% (the rate for preterm births was not available by state).

Women in the US are subjected to an ever-increasing array of interventions and technologies, many of which are highly invasive, with little or no evidence of their effectiveness. In fact, research evidence shows that the routine use of unnecessary interventions put mothers and babies at risk. Medical interventions are also expensive and often used not for the benefit of women and babies, but for the convenience or legal protection of doctors and hospitals. Unfortunately, few women are aware of this fact when agreeing to interventions and surgical procedures.

Pregnancy and childbirth are normal, healthy processes, and the majority of women can give birth safely without extraordinary intervention or surgery. Midwives are specialists in normal birth, and in developed countries where midwives are the primary care providers for pregnant women, mortality and cesarean birth rates are much lower than in the United States.

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BirthNet is a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the public about maternity care in order to improve it. Childbirth is a normal, natural and profound event in a woman's life.

BirthNet's goal is to encourage all women and families to learn about their rights and options. Our primary programs include education in the classroom (high school or college classes), community forums or workshops, and media outreach. BirthNet has endorsed the Mother Friendly Childbirth Initiative and supports the Midwives Model of Care. For more information about BirthNet, please contact Carolyn Keefe 518-482-2504 or [carolyn@birthnewyork.org](mailto:carolyn@birthnewyork.org)

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