

Study highlights dangers of injury to infant with breech delivery

A new study finds that infants who are born breeched face high risks, including birth asphyxia.

A new study reports that a large number of babies who present in a breech position are still born vaginally as opposed to intervention with a Cesarean section, or C-section. Unfortunately, the study also found that there continue to be high risks associated with a breech delivery. As a result, researchers are encouraging physicians to discuss these risks candidly with patients who are opting to have a vaginal delivery.

Basics on breech

Generally, a fetus shifts position during the last few weeks of pregnancy so that the baby's head is facing downwards. This aids in delivery, allowing the baby's head to emerge from the uterus first. If this shift is not made and the baby begins to emerge feet or butt first, the child is born breech.

In most cases, a physician will begin to discuss the possibility of a breech delivery and various options that are available if the fetus does not make this shift by the 36th week of gestation. It is important for a physician to discuss the risks as various complications can arise. These complications are generally connected with an increased risk of the head becoming trapped within the birth canal. A report published by the National Institutes of Health noted that breech delivery in full-term infants could lead to [birth asphyxia](#) and trauma.

Various factors can increase the risk of a breech delivery, including an early labor, abnormally shaped uterus, the presence of more than one baby within the womb or if the placenta is on the lower part of the uterus.

More on the study

The study focused on the percentage of breech deliveries and whether or not there were any resulting injuries or fatalities. It reviewed data from the Netherlands. Researchers with the study noted that the Dutch have very organized data from both midwives and obstetricians. As a result, the study was able to include an analysis of data from over 1.4 million deliveries. Within this group, almost 60,000 were breech deliveries.

Based on this information, researchers found that the risk of injury to infants who are born in the breech position remained the same at the end of the study as it did at the beginning. Even with advances in technology and medical equipment, the dangers connected to breach delivery have not appeared to decrease significantly over the last 15 years.

More on birth asphyxia

As noted above, a possible complication tied to breech delivery includes birth asphyxia. Birth asphyxia, or a lack of oxygen to the baby's brain and other organs, can lead to permanent damage. Some symptoms include a lack of or weak breathing, bluish or pale skin color, low heart rate, poor reflexes and seizures.

Infants that suffer from birth asphyxia could require a wide range of costly treatments.

Legal counsel can help

If a physician or medical professional did not follow the acceptable standard of care during a delivery, a medical malpractice claim may exist. Victims of poor practices could be eligible to receive compensation to help cover the high cost of treatment. Contact an experienced medical malpractice attorney to discuss your options and help better ensure your legal rights and remedies are protected.

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