



ACOG *Statement of Policy*

As issued by the ACOG Executive Board

OUT-OF-HOSPITAL BIRTHS IN THE UNITED STATES

Labor and delivery is a physiologic process that most women experience without complications. Ongoing surveillance of the mother and fetus is essential because serious intrapartum complications may arise with little or no warning, even in low risk pregnancies. In some of these instances, the availability of expertise and interventions on an urgent or emergent basis may be life-saving for the mother, the fetus or the newborn and may reduce the likelihood of an adverse outcome. For these reasons, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) believes that the hospital, including a birthing center within a hospital complex, that conforms to the standards outlined by American Academy of Pediatrics and ACOG,¹ is the safest setting for labor, delivery, and the immediate postpartum period. ACOG also strongly supports providing conditions that will improve the birthing experience for women and their families without compromising safety.

Studies comparing the safety and outcome of U.S. births in the hospital with those occurring in other settings are limited and have not been scientifically rigorous. The development of well-designed research studies of sufficient size, prepared in consultation with obstetric departments and approved by institutional review boards, might clarify the comparative safety of births in different settings. Until the results of such studies are convincing, ACOG strongly opposes out-of-hospital births. Although ACOG acknowledges a woman's right to make informed decisions regarding her delivery, ACOG does not support programs or individuals that advocate for or who provide out-of-hospital births.

¹American Academy of Pediatrics and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Guidelines for Perinatal Care, 5th Edition*. Elk Grove Village, IL, AAP/ACOG, 2002.

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