Module 9
If I Want a VBAC, Where Can I Give Birth? Hospital? Birth Center? Home?
Planning a Hospital VBAC
Advantages of Planning a Hospital VBAC

- Your birth is likely to be covered by your insurance plan.
- You can have an epidural.
- You’ll have access to a cesarean in case of complications.
Disadvantages of Planning a Hospital VBAC

- You’re more likely to have routine interventions that complicate labor.
- You’re more likely to have labor augmented with oxytocin if your labor slows down.
- You’re less likely to have freedom of movement.
- You’re less likely to have a variety of methods of pain relief.
Although many hospitals do not offer medical care for VBAC, some have made it possible to work with a mother’s birth plan and still provide safe care.

You and your baby may be monitored with a telemetry unit giving you the freedom to walk around the labor and delivery floor.

Your caregiver may establish an IV site (Heparin Lock) in case you may need a cesarean but not attach it to any fluids if not necessary.

Your own physician may agree to stay in the hospital until you give birth.

Dr. Tami Michele, DO, Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Gerber Memorial Hospital, Fremont, Michigan. Personal communications.

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Some hospitals without “immediate” capability for an emergency cesarean may ask mothers to sign a *Refusal of Repeat Cesarean* form before formally admitting them on the labor and delivery unit.¹

This allows mothers to labor for a VBAC with the understanding of the hospital’s staffing capabilities and response time in case a cesarean is needed.

See an example of Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial Hospital’s *Refusal of Repeat Cesarean* form (as a pdf) in the Resources for Parents.

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¹ See Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial, Refusal of Repeat Cesarean Form in the Resources for Parents list.
Look for a **Supportive** Maternity Care Team
To Increase Your Odds for a VBAC
Look for a Supportive Maternity Care Team

- How do your caregivers view VBAC? With confidence or fear?
- Are they giving you enough information to help you make decisions about your birth?
- Are your care providers taking the time to answer your questions? To discuss the benefits and risks of treatments, procedures, and drugs?
Look for a Supportive Maternity Care Team

- Are they treating you with respect?
- Are they supportive of your wishes?
- Do they make you feel safe?
- Do they view labor and birth as a normal process?
- Do they encourage doulas, family members or partners to help you when you give birth?
Look for a **Supportive Maternity Care Team**

- Do they offer community resources that may be helpful to you such as a VBAC support group, prenatal yoga class, childbirth class, websites?
- What are your caregivers’ hesitations about VBAC? Can you discuss them so that you can labor with confidence?
- If they are not comfortable with VBAC, are they giving you referrals to other providers, birth centers or hospitals that support VBAC?
- If you don’t feel that your caregiver can give you full support to labor for a VBAC, are you willing to consider making a change?
Look for a Supportive Environment in Which to Give Birth

- Do you have access to a bath, birthing tub, or shower?
- Do you have the space to walk? Sit? Kneel?
- Do you have access to light foods and drink?
- Can the light be dimmed? Can noise be reduced?
- Can you listen to the music of your choice?
- Do you have privacy?
- Do you have a squat bar, birth stool, rocking chair or birth ball?
- Do you have furniture, pillows or a bed rail to lean on?
VBAC-Friendly Care

With VBAC-friendly caregivers who provide safe care while respecting your informed choices and a birthing environment that provides a variety of options to ease your pain and help your labor progress you have an excellent chance of giving birth normally.
For many mothers, planning a VBAC in a hospital is the only option available. There are benefits and disadvantages.

A hospital with low intervention and cesarean rates and high VBAC rates is more likely to be fully supportive of VBAC.

Some hospitals have created VBAC supportive guidelines to give mothers what they need to have a safe vaginal birth.
Checklist for Parents
Questions to Ask for Birth in a Hospital

- What is your cesarean and VBAC rate?
- What are your intervention rates (induction, routine use of IV, continuous fetal monitoring)?
- Do you support non-drug methods of pain relief?
- Does your facility have VBAC guidelines? What are they?
- What protocols are left up to the doctor’s or midwife’s preference?
- Do you have a time limit for labor or birth?
Questions to Ask for Birth in a Hospital

- Can I have my family members with me?
- Can I have my baby with me, skin-to-skin after birth?
- Do you have a lactation specialist to help me with breastfeeding?
- How do you respond to a potential non-vbac emergency such as a placental abruption (placenta separates from the uterine wall before the baby is born), fetal distress, shoulder dystocia or an umbilical cord prolapse?
- Can you refer me to another hospital that does support VBAC?
Resources for Parents

- American College of Nurse Midwives
  Using Water for Labor and Birth
- BirthNetwork National
  Finding a Mother-Friendly Care Provider
- Choices in Childbirth
  Choose Your Birth Team
- Childbirth Connection
  Choosing a Caregiver: What You Need to Know
  Choosing a Place of Birth: What You Need to Know
  Understanding & Navigating the Maternity Care System
Resources for Parents

- **Coalition for Improving Maternity Services**
  Having a Baby? Ten Questions to Ask

- **Contra Costa Regional Medical Center (California)**
  Vaginal Birth After Cesarean Improvement Project (video)

- **International Cesarean Awareness Network**
  VBAC Policies in U.S. Hospitals

- **Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial Hospital**
  Refusal of Repeat Cesarean Form [Appendix A in Teaching Guide]