

# American Women Speak About VBAC

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*In an effort to bring the consumer perspective to the 2010 National Institutes of Health VBAC Conference, Jennifer Kamel, Founder of VBAC Facts, asked women across America, "Why is the option of VBAC important to you?" This is what they said.*

**Alabama** - To avoid not being able to carry your baby because he's dead from the placental abruption (or uterine rupture) as a result of those damn previous cesareans. - Amanda Martin

**Arizona** – VBAC is important to me because I don't want to continue to have increased risks with each major surgery. – Amanda McMahon

**Arkansas** - Personally, VBAC is stellar important to me because I wanted to give birth to my babies, not have them cut out and handed to me. – Jer Walker

**California** – It is important to me because I have the right to experience the complex passage of vaginal birth and the positive cascade of effects for mom and baby. I want the right to experience VBAC without driving 90 minutes or more with traffic. Successful or not, VBAC empowers women for choice and a chance to fill an emotional void that is unmatched. The whole "readily available" lawyer talk certainly is not protecting our other high risk patients. – Wendy Settles-Smith, L&D RN for 13 years

Because when a woman experiences a VBAC, she reclaims her body and gets to see that she is in fact perfectly capable of giving birth without surgery. She is no longer broken. Her body and spirit heal. - Layla Mairleitner

To me it is like saying someone should be required to have open heart surgery, even though a laparoscope would be safer, just because doctors/ hospitals/ insurance companies, prefer it that way. It is so much bigger than our desires to experience a vaginal birth or even to be some kind of hippie earth mother. It is about our right to safe and respectful medical care. - Courtney Stange-Tregear

I wanted a VBAC to heal my raw emotions and psychological trauma caused by not having a vaginal birth the first time and because I believe it's safer.

Unfortunately, I had to travel 3 hours to get to the closest facility that allowed VBACs. But having the chance to VBAC was great! - Andrea Oilar

Because I love women and love babies and have spent 20 years investigating what affords the best possible beginning for them both and that is a vaginal birth. – Joni Nichols BS MS CCE CD (DONA) (CBI)

It is wrong that I have to travel to another county and fight for a normal, safe, healthy birth for my baby. Hospitals and doctors need to get their priorities straight and practice true informed consent. - Kathleen Spitzner

My VBAC proved to me that I was not as broken as I felt after receiving so many labels [FTP, etc] regarding my cesarean. - Alexandra Rounds

**Colorado** - VBAC allowed me to trust in my body and let it do what it needed to do. My midwife and her assistant viewed my "long labor" as simply a variation of normal. I was finally able to deliver my 10 lb baby, with a nuchal hand, in an amazing waterbirth. My body is amazing and strong and did not let me down. - Jill Kuhn, Ph.D. (Clinical Psychologist and Professor)

**Connecticut** - Without VBAC, women have no choice and are forced into dangerous births. - Danielle Ann Michaud-Elwood

**Florida** - VBAC matters because it is lifelong; it is forever; it is not short term. The effects of a VBAC never wear off. – Shannon Mitchell

My VBAC offered me a better recovery without worrying about an incision site. - Meredith Shadwill, HBA2C (home birth after two cesareans) mom

**Hawaii** - The fact that the possibility of a malpractice suit dictates what most obstetricians offer and results in them pushing the birth option that is more likely to end in a mother's death is totally incomprehensible to me.

Evidence-based care is what our standard should be. Every single obstetrician should be pushing the safest option for mother and baby, not the safest option for avoiding a lawsuit. - Naomi Shimamoto

**Idaho** - My VBAC was validation of my womanhood. It has made me a better mother and spouse. - Bonnie Messinger

**Indiana** - I wanted to have a large family and I think VBAC is the best option instead of repeat c-sections!! I have had 6 VBACs so far and hope to be able to have as many more! - Stacy Gilbert

**Kentucky** - Because having my baby cut out of my abdomen was very traumatic for me. The bonding was more difficult [than my three previous vaginal births] and PPD followed. - Denise Hayes

**Massachusetts** - When my son was born by (unnecessary) cesarean, I felt like someone had deflated my belly and handed me a baby. He was mine, but a part of me felt like they could have handed me any baby. But when I look at my daughter's head and stroke it while I am nursing her, I can say I gave birth to that head. I gave birth to that head! This is my baby. And no one can take that away from me. - Catie Ladd

**Michigan** - There are all sorts of "soft" reasons why VBAC is great but when it really comes down to the bottom line, what keeps me working for ICAN, what brings tears to my eyes, is the fact that women and babies are dying who shouldn't, because VBAC is no longer a real option for most women in the U.S. - Gretchen Humphries, MS DVM

**Mississippi**. After my first baby's labor ended with a cesarean, I felt that I really hadn't been given a chance. I felt bullied and pushed into a cesarean I didn't want because it was more convenient for the doctor than letting me continue at a 'slower than normal' dilation rate. - Nancy White

**Nebraska** - If VBAC was not an option, my daughter would have been an only child. I could never willingly conceive knowing my child would be cut out of me via a completely unnecessary surgery. - Kristen Kloopping

**New Jersey** - VBAC is certainly safe for both mom and baby as long as the original incision in the uterus is a low

segment transverse incision. Evidence based medicine reports approximately 75% of women can successfully VBAC. As long as the mom is aware of the risks (minimal) and the benefits (MANY) they should have the right to VBAC. - JoAnn McQueen Yates, CNM

**New York** - Because I didn't want to go through surgery if it wasn't necessary. Doctors take little stock in the emotional and psychological factors of giving birth - it's not just about pushing out a baby!! - Carrie Moyer Howe

**Ohio** - Delivering vaginally for me was a "rite of passage." I was finally able to cast off the numerous doubts and my sense of failure I experienced. I really was "adequate." - Ellen Bertke, Nurse Manager & VBAC mom X2

**Oregon** - After my c-section with my daughter, laughing was extremely painful for weeks. I would think, how awful that during a time that should be filled with joy, I'm unable to laugh. - Rachel Radtke, HBAC mom

I think it's important for the operating room space and staff to be available for a true emergency cesarean, rather than have me taking up their space and time for convenience. - Rebecca Sue Congdon

**Pennsylvania** - If I had to plan a pregnancy to end in surgery, I would not have another child, period. - Judy Phillips, DVM, PhD (molecular biology)

VBAC is important to me because it has the capacity of healing my broken Self. - Monica Ruiz-Melendez, PhD.

**South Carolina** - VBAC is a natural conclusion to a natural process. Not to mention, how many babies with true emergencies, would be saved by not having operating rooms tied up with elective cesareans? - Raechel Fredrickson

**West Virginia** - Aside from the fact that offering VBACs is practicing Evidence Based Medicine and should be offered without question, I would like for other women to experience the joy and self-assurance that comes from working with her body as well as the indescribable feeling of pulling her fresh, warm baby up to her chest as I experienced with my HBA3C. - Teresa Stire