

What Can I do if my baby is Breech?

What is a breech birth?

Before birth, most babies are in a head-down position in the mother's uterus. That's why most babies are born headfirst. Sometimes the part of the baby that is head down is not the head, but the buttocks or the feet. When a baby is in that position before birth, it's called a breech birth or breech baby. Many babies are breech early in pregnancy, but most of them turn to the headfirst position near the end of the pregnancy. Babies that are born early are more likely to be breech. If more than one baby is in the uterus at one time, one or more of the babies may be breech. Abnormal levels of amniotic fluid around the baby may result in a breech birth. As you get closer to your due date, your doctor will be able to tell (by physical exam, ultrasound or both) if your baby is breech.

Can a breech baby be delivered without a cesarean?

Some breech babies may be safely delivered from the vagina. However, more complications can occur if the baby is breech. A baby who is breech may be very small, or it may have birth defects. Breech babies may also have accidents during delivery that can damage the umbilical cord or cause asphyxia, or even cause death of the mother or baby.

Although breech babies can be delivered vaginally, it is generally safer and easier to deliver babies head first from the vagina. So, many times doctors deliver breech babies by cesarean delivery (c-section). Risks are involved with cesarean deliver, too, such as bleeding, infection and longer hospital stays for both the mother and her baby.

Can I do anything to help if my baby is breech?

It is very important to see your doctor regularly when you are pregnant. Your doctor can tell if your baby is breech and help plan what to do. Some doctors will plan to deliver the baby by cesarean section. Others may give their patients exercises to do at home that may help turn the baby to be head-first position. Some doctors try to turn the baby in the mother's uterus using a procedure called external cephalic version. If this procedure is successful and the baby stays head down, a normal vaginal delivery is more likely.