Spinning Babies

The effects of turning unborn babies at the end of pregnancy (around 38 weeks or more) to reduce problems during childbirth

Type of birth

The best outcomes in childbirth for both mothers and babies are when the baby is born head-first. If the baby is in another position, there is a higher risk of complications including the need for a caesarean section.

Without ECV

| 75 babies out of 100 did not have a caesarean section |
| 21 babies out of 100 had a head-first vaginal birth |
| 8 babies out of 100 had a breech delivery |

With ECV

| 37 babies out of 100 did not have a caesarean section |
| 50 babies out of 100 had a head-first vaginal birth |
| 2 babies out of 100 had a breech delivery |

ECV decreased not having a head-first vaginal birth by 42 babies per 100
If ECV was not used, these babies would have a risk of at least 53 and as low as 30 by chance.

Caeasarean section

Caeasarean section rates vary greatly between countries and over time.

Avoiding the need for surgery is especially important in countries with limited resources for healthcare.

Without ECV

| 88 women out of 100 did not have a caesarean section |
| 12 women out of 100 had a caesarean section |

With ECV

| 62 women out of 100 did not have a caesarean section |
| 32 women out of 100 had a caesarean section |

ECV reduced caesarean section by 14 babies per 100
If ECV was not used, these babies would have a risk of at least 52 and as low as 38 by chance.

Is ECV safe for babies?

ECV made no difference to the number of babies who had an Apgar score less than 7 at 5 minutes, umbilical pH less than 7.26, were admitted to the neonatal unit, or died.

These studies are too small to show if ECV is safe to use in women with low-risk pregnancies, however other types of studies suggest that it is safe.

We also reviewed studies about potential side effects in high-risk cases, such as mothers who already had a caesarean section.

How good is the evidence?

The quality of the studies was varied.

In all trials, women and health professionals knew whether ECV was happening or not, which may have affected the results.

There were differences between studies in the size of the benefit of ECV.

The quality of the evidence was low for perinatal death, and very low for all other outcomes.

External cephalic version for breech presentation at term

Intrauterine evaluation of baby's position by ultrasound

National Institute for Health Research

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