

June 12, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

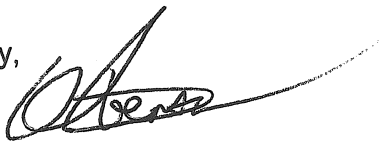
Re: Recommendation that sponge and needle counts occur pre and post vaginal birth

Sponge and needle count pre and post vaginal birth has not been a common practice for all vaginal births in Alberta. Failure to count sponges and needles contributes to a risk for retention of sponges and needle stick injuries to clinicians, mothers and staff. This gap in practice has been identified as a patient safety issue by practitioners who have forwarded the issue to the Alberta Medical Association Committee on Reproductive Care and the Alberta Perinatal Health Program, Practice Support Steering Committee. Both committees recommend that measures be taken to close the gap in practice and reduce the subsequent risks. It is therefore recommended:

- that sponge and needle counts occur pre and post all vaginal births;
- that each facility develop a sponge and needle count protocol for vaginal births;
- that the sponge and needle counts be documented on the Alberta Delivery Record, Part II;
- that there be changes to the Alberta Delivery Record, Part II to document the counts;
- that those imbued with administrative and patient safety responsibilities follow-up to ensure that sponge and needle counts are being conducted according to protocol and documented accordingly; and
- that the Alberta Perinatal Health Program disseminate the Alberta Delivery Record, Part II and notice of change to clinicians and key stakeholders across the province.

The full recommendation, the rationale, background, practice gap and references are attached for your consideration. Should you have questions or require additional information, please contact Brenda Kaufman at 780-735-1007 or Brenda.Kaufman@albertahealthservices.ca

Sincerely,



Dr. Len Evenson MD FRCP(C)
Co-Chair, Alberta Medical Association Committee on Reproductive Care
Obstetrical Consultant, Alberta Perinatal Health Program