



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WOMEN HAVING A CAESAREAN SECTION

(Information from women who have had a caesarean section)

Even if you are planning for a normal birth, it is worth thinking about your options for caesarean for use if necessary.

During the birth

- Women have had the screen removed so they can watch the operation, or have used a mirror to watch, or have been helped to sit up a little so they can see their baby being born.
- The paediatric unit, resuscitation unit and weighing scales, where the baby is checked over at birth should be within sight you so that providing your baby is well (and most caesarean born babies are), he/she need never leave your sight or hearing.
- You can ask the midwife to give you a running commentary, and/or for music to be playing, or for quiet in theatre (particularly at the moment of birth). If you ask for quiet at the moment of birth then your voice can be the first voice your baby hears.
- You can ask for your baby to be delivered onto your chest or to discover your baby's sex for yourself rather than being told.
- You can ask to have photographs taken. Some people like photographs of the baby being lifted out of the incision (others don't!). You can also ask for one of the baby in the weighing scales - a good one because it shows the weight too.
- You can ask for the lights to be dimmed for a couple of minutes at the moment of birth. Babies are born with their eyes open so if the lights are dimmed and there is silence, yours can be the first face that comes into view and yours the first voice your baby hears.
- You can ask for your baby to be wrapped in a blanket and laid across your shoulder so you and your birth partner can 'baby gaze' while you are being sewn up - it's a wonderful distraction!
- You could choose a special soft blanket or towel for baby to be wrapped in (or to be draped over both of you during skin-to-skin). You could sleep with the blanket the night before your CS so that even if you can't hold your baby he/she will be wrapped up and still be able to smell you.
- You can delay having your baby washed, bathed or dressed until you are back on the maternity ward and have fed him or her for the first time.
- You can ask to be shown your placenta and have it explained to you by a midwife.



After the birth

- **Getting up** - Remember to roll onto your side to get out of bed, do not try to sit straight up as this will put strain on your scar. You may be encouraged to get out of bed the day of surgery and certainly by the next day. (Do not, however, attempt to get up by yourself. The nurse should be at your side the first time.) In the meantime, get the blood going in your legs by wiggling your feet, rotating your ankles, and moving and stretching your legs. By the second day, you should be taking a couple of short walks with help from your partner or a nurse. This will help your circulation, make your bowels less sluggish, and make it much less likely that you'll develop blood clots
- **Scar** - Support the scar with a hand or pillow when coughing, sneezing or laughing.
- **Do your postnatal exercises** - if you are in doubt ask to see the obstetric physiotherapist.
- **Knickers** - High waist knickers are the most comfortable as they don't put any pressure on the scar or stitches.
- **Shoes** - Try to wear slip on shoes or slippers, as it will be more difficult to bend for the first few days.
- **Lifting** - Avoid carrying the baby up and down stairs, if you can, have a changing mat and carry cot or Moses basket down stairs for use during the day.
- **Driving** - If you return to driving before your 6-week check, make sure your insurance company is covering you, and that you can do an emergency stop!
- **Contraception** - if you previously used a cap it will need to be refitted and use of an IUD (coil) is not recommended for 6 months.
- **Help** - Ask your visitors to help, get them to make tea, do some washing or take the baby so you can have a bath.
- **Wind** - You may experience some severe wind pains following the birth – this is normal, let your midwife know if you are in pain!
- **After pains** - You will experience after pains, like contractions, this is your uterus closing down, and these can last for 4-5 days following the birth.
- **Bleeding** - You will still produce Lochia, which may be either heavy or light, if you suddenly experience heavy persistent bleeding you must inform your midwife.
- **Going to the toilet** – some women are anxious about going to the toilet for the first time after a caesarean section, it can be uncomfortable and you must remember to support your scar if you need to push. You should try to empty your bladder regularly and avoid constipation by, drinking plenty and eating fresh fruit and veg.
- **The scar** - Your incision will feel better day by day, though it may continue to be tender for several weeks. Call your midwife if you have signs of an infection, including warmth, redness, or swelling at the incision site; oozing from the incision site; worsening or sudden onset of pain; or any fever (even if your incision looks fine).
- **Rest** - Try to get as much rest as possible – don't forget you are recovering from major surgery.



- If your baby is well there should be no reason why he/she should be separated from you in theatre or in the recovery room. Skin-to-skin contact should be facilitated and you should be helped to start to breastfeed when you want to.

- If you have a general anaesthetic you might want to think about who should introduce your baby to you when you come around, and who (among family and friends) should be allowed to see your baby before you do if you are so unwell that meeting your baby is delayed.

