

Patient Information Leaflet

Recovering from a Caesarean Section (CS)



General Information

This leaflet has been designed for women who may have come into hospital expecting to give birth normally and for some reason have had an emergency or elective caesarean section. If you have had an emergency CS you might be feeling:

- ◆ confused and upset
- ◆ sore and uncomfortable
- ◆ disappointed, or even a sense of failure

This is quite normal and you will need some time to come to terms with your experience. In some situations you might have had the operation very quickly and everything has become a blur. Your recollection of events surrounding your birth may not be clear. You might even have had a general anaesthetic and this can leave you with very confused feelings. You might also experience some symptoms you don't recognise such as being tearful and frightened. This is common when you have been in an emergency situation and you, or your baby's life, may have been at risk.

Why did I need a caesarean section?

After the operation the doctor will have spoken briefly to you about the reasons why you needed the caesarean section. Some of the reasons women have a caesarean section are:

- ◆ Labour does not progress—sometimes due to the baby being OP (back to back)
- ◆ There are concerns about how your baby is coping during the labour—certain changes in the baby's heart rate pattern on the monitor
- ◆ Bleeding in pregnancy or labour
- ◆ Severe raised blood pressure or pre-eclampsia
- ◆ Baby is not head down—could be bottom first (breech) or transversel i.e. lying sideways across your abdomen
- ◆ Placenta is 'low-lying' i.e. covering the entrance to your vagina

We encourage you to discuss anything that is not clear about your caesarean section while the experience is still fresh in your mind. The best way to get answers to any questions you may have is by asking the midwives and doctors who looked after you, while you are still in hospital. They will be happy to discuss things with you. If you would like to talk to a midwife in more detail about your experience, then you can contact the Birth-After Thoughts team.

Recovering from an emergency caesarean section

Your stay in hospital

If you make a normal recovery you can expect to go home after 1-2 days unless there were complications requiring you to be monitored for longer. It can take longer to recover from a CS than a vaginal birth, about 6 weeks in total, so try to ensure that you have help at home.

Pain

While you are still in hospital the midwife will ask you about your level of pain and give you painkillers to help you stay comfortable. If you are in pain, please let the midwife know so that she can help you. You will be given help with getting out of bed, feeding your baby and looking after yourself.

Your wound, stitches and catheter

The midwife will check you over regularly and make sure your wound is healing well and there are no signs of infection. He/she will explain how you can look after your wound once you are at home. You may have some bruising along the scar within a few days but this will normally disappear. Usually the wound is stitched using a dissolvable stitch; this means that you do not have to have the stitches removed. The midwife will advise you how the surgeon has repaired the skin and will advise you of how to care for your wound. You will have a catheter (tube) inserted into your bladder for about 12 hours after your CS and then you will be encouraged to void into a container so that the volume can be measured to ensure you have normal bladder function.

Going home

Once you are home you should continue to take time to rest and take any prescribed medication that you have been given so that you can recover. The community midwife will visit you the next day and will explain the routine of home visiting for you and your baby. Your midwife will ensure that you are recovering normally.

Caring for yourself

You should have a daily shower or bath and keep your wound clean and dry. You will experience some vaginal bleeding after your CS so should also change your sanitary towel frequently. You may find that your blood loss is light and appears to stop quickly, however the more you are active, the more the blood loss may increase. Discuss with your midwife if you are concerned.

Birth After Thoughts

If you would like to discuss your care and/or read through your maternity records, please contact the Birth After Thoughts contact number and leave a message.

Telephone No: 07879 694725

A member of the Birth After Thoughts Team will contact you and offer you an appointment .

Returning to normal activities

You may resume your usual activities at home when you feel ready to do so. There are no time restrictions as everyone is different; however remember you have had a major abdominal operation and should need adequate time to rest. You should not undertake heavy tasks such as lifting anything heavier than your baby, vacuuming, standing to iron for long periods and heavy housework until 6 weeks after your caesarean. It is advised that you gradually increase your level of activity after this.

Sex

You can resume sexual intimacy at any point; there is no right time however some women wait until their wound is healed and the blood loss has stopped. You must use contraceptives at all times if you do not want to have another baby quickly, as you can conceive anytime after the birth, even if breast-feeding.

Driving

You will need to contact your insurance company for more information about when you can return to driving.

Symptoms to report

Please contact your midwife or GP as soon as possible if you experience any of the following:

- ◆ feeling unwell
- ◆ feeling hot and feverish
- ◆ pain that is new or becoming worse
- ◆ signs of a wound infection: redness, swelling or oozing from the wound

Please contact your midwife, GP or the triage number (see back page) urgently if you experience any of the following (consider calling an ambulance if you are very unwell):

- ◆ Swelling and tenderness in the back of your leg(s)
- ◆ Shortness of breath
- ◆ Pain in your chest when breathing

Future pregnancies

Approximately 70 out of 100 women (70%) who have had a caesarean section who plan for a vaginal birth will have a vaginal birth in the future. Although most women can plan to have a normal birth, occasionally some women may be advised to have a planned caesarean section. If you become pregnant again your doctor or midwife will discuss your birth plan with you during the antenatal period and will advise you of any precautions you may need to take.

Follow-up

Your GP will be notified that you have had an emergency caesarean section and of your discharge home.

You will be advised to see your GP at 6 weeks after your baby's birth for a routine check-up of you and your baby.

Further information

If you have any problems following your caesarean, please contact your community midwife or GP.

If you have any feelings of anxiety, tearfulness or confusion about the operation speak to your midwife or GP.

Before you leave hospital the doctor will complete the information below. Please keep this safe for future reference as it may be useful when planning your next pregnancy.

You have had a caesarean section and the reason for this was *(please tick)*:

- Concerns about your baby's heart rate—fetal distress
- Failure to progress in 1st stage of labour
- Failure to progress in 2nd stage of labour
- Malpresentation of baby (breech, baby in a difficult position)
- Obstetric emergency (cord prolapse, bleeding)
- Failed induction of labour
- Low-lying placenta
- Other, describe:

Your cervix dilated to _____ cms before the caesarean section was performed.

Your baby was in _____ position when the caesarean section was performed.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Designation:

The recommended mode of delivery next time is:

- Vaginal birth: this carries an approximate chance of success of 70% (or 90% if you have had a previous vaginal birth)*
- Planned caesarean section*

Further Information:

NICE Caesarean Section
<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg132>

Contact Numbers:

Consultant Led Unit
(Delivery Suite): 01438 284124 (24 hrs)

Triage for any post-natal queries or problems: 01438–286168

Birth After Thoughts: 07879 694725
(you can leave messages)

www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk

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