

## **Patient Information**

# **Recovering from a Caesarean birth at home**

Women's Services



## Introduction

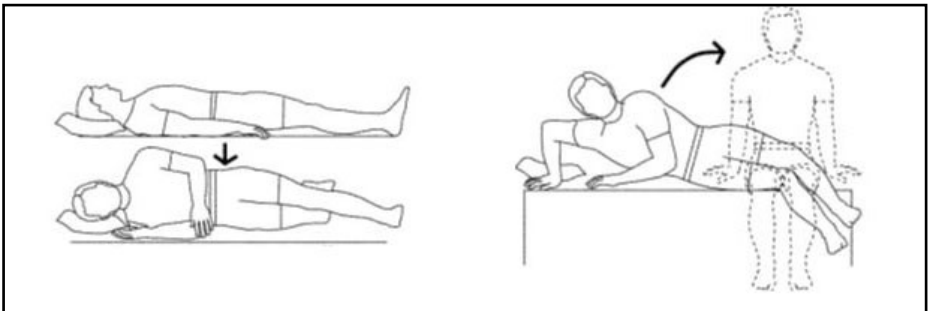
The purpose of this leaflet is to help answer any questions or worries you may have about recovering from a Caesarean birth once you return home. If you have any questions after reading this leaflet, please speak to a member of the midwifery team.

## How long does it take to recover from a Caesarean birth?

A Caesarean birth is just like any other major abdominal surgery, so your body will need time to heal. It may take around 6 to 8 weeks to recover from a Caesarean birth, however, if you experienced any problems during or after your surgery, you may find that you need slightly longer.

## How do I get in and out of bed?

You may find it difficult to get in and out of bed for some time after your operation. It may be easier for you to first roll onto your side, then drop your legs over the edge of the bed and slowly push yourself up sideways into a sitting position. This technique is shown in the picture below. You can do the opposite to get back into bed.



## How do I look after my wound?

The standard honeycomb dressing can be removed after 48 hours of your Caesarean birth. If you are unsure, the midwives can advise you about how long your dressing will need to stay on for. They will also remove any stitches or clips (unless your stitches are dissolvable).

At home, make sure you gently clean and dry your wound **every day**. Your wound will feel sore and bruised for the first few weeks. You may feel more comfortable wearing loose clothes and cotton underwear.

**If you notice any of the following with your wound, contact your midwife or GP immediately as these may be the signs of an infection:**

- Ongoing pain
- Redness
- Oozing , leaking or discharge
- Any smell

### **How long will I bleed for?**

It is normal to experience vaginal blood loss after your Caesarean birth; this can last for several weeks. If your bleeding is prolonged, heavy or offensive, you will need to seek medical advice.

### **When can I return to normal activities?**

As soon as you get home, you should stay mobile and engage in gentle activities. It is also important to take plenty of rest and it is a good idea to arrange for help at home.

There are some activities you may not be able to do straight away:

- Driving (6-8 weeks) - check your driving insurance policy
- Having sex - when you are ready
- Exercising and sport (6-8 weeks)
- Lifting objects heavier than your baby (6-8 weeks)

Avoid these activities until you feel comfortable and well enough to do so.

## **How do I control my pain at home?**

Most women experience pain and discomfort for several days or even weeks after their Caesarean birth. To help control the pain, take regular paracetamol and ibuprofen for as long as you need to.

Those who are breastfeeding should avoid taking aspirin or codeine as this may be harmful for your baby. If your pain doesn't improve despite regular pain relief, speak to your GP for advice.

## **Will I have a follow-up appointment?**

Your GP will be notified that you have had a Caesarean birth and have been discharged home.

You should make an appointment to see your GP 6 weeks after your baby's birth for a routine health and wellbeing check-up for you and your baby.

## **When do I need to get medical help?**

Please seek urgent medical help if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Severe pain
- Fever (high temperature)
- Red, swollen, painful or oozing wound
- Heavy or ongoing vaginal bleeding
- Burning or stinging when passing urine
- Difficulty breathing, cough or chest pain
- Pain and swelling in your lower legs

If you are experiencing any feelings of low mood, tearfulness, anxiety or irritability, please contact your GP, midwife or health visitor for support.

## **When can I get pregnant again?**

It is recommended that you wait for at least 18 months before becoming pregnant again. It is important to allow your wound to heal fully to avoid any serious complications in your next pregnancy. In the meantime, you can discuss options for contraception with your doctor or midwife. Most women who have had one Caesarean birth can usually deliver their next baby vaginally. When you are ready for another baby, the options will be discussed with you.

## **Birth afterthoughts or debrief**

You may still have unanswered questions or concerns about your Caesarean birth. The Birth Afterthoughts team provide a confidential listening and debriefing service that is available for those who wish to discuss and understand what happened during their pregnancy and labour. Your community midwife can advise further.

**Birth Afterthoughts Service - [maternitybat.enh-tr@nhs.net](mailto:maternitybat.enh-tr@nhs.net)**

Please email the Birth Afterthoughts Service and a member of the team will contact you back to offer you an appointment (please include a telephone number you can be contacted on).

Please use the space on the next page to write down any questions you may wish to ask.

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**Before you leave the 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 an elective/emergency Caesarean birth (*delete as appropriate*).

The reason for this was (*please tick*):

- ☐ Concerns about your baby's health or yours
- ☐ Your baby was in a difficult position for labour, e.g. breech
- ☐ You were expecting more than one baby
- ☐ Problems with the placenta, e.g. low-lying placenta
- ☐ Slow progress during labour
- ☐ Unsuccessful induction of labour
- ☐ Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your cervix was dilated to \_\_\_\_\_ cm before the Caesarean birth was performed.

Your baby was in \_\_\_\_\_ position when the Caesarean birth was performed.

The suggested mode of delivery next time is:

- ☐ Vaginal birth (~70% chance of success)
- ☐ Planned Caesarean birth (if  $\geq 2$  previous Caesarean sections)

Please note that the above is a recommendation and your individualised birth plan will be discussed with you in the future.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Useful contact details

**Consultant Led Unit**, Lister Hospital      ☎ 01438 284124 (24 hours)

**Maternity Triage**, Lister Hospital      ☎ 01438 286168

**Birth Afterthoughts Service** (email) - [maternitybat.enh-tr@nhs.net](mailto:maternitybat.enh-tr@nhs.net)

## Useful websites for more information

- **NHS website** - [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/)

## Further reading

There are other maternity information leaflets you may wish to read. These are available on our East & North Herts NHS Trust website: [www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk/patient-information/](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk/patient-information/)

**You and your baby are important to us –  
Thank you for choosing The Diamond Jubilee Maternity Unit  
East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust**