

What happens to me after the baby is delivered?

- The doctors will deliver the placenta (the afterbirth), give medications to control bleeding, and stitch the womb and other tissue layers.
- The skin will be closed with stitches, which will either dissolve on their own after a couple of weeks or you may have them removed by the midwife after 7 – 10 days .
- After the surgery, you will be moved to a recovery room for some time to be closely monitored for any problems. Your baby can usually stay with you in the recovery room.

This is a good time to have the baby skin to skin and to begin breastfeeding.

- Later you will be moved to a regular ward in the hospital with other women who have also delivered.
- The spinal anaesthesia starts to wear off around this time and then pain medication will be given through your drip or through medication given in other ways.
- You will not be able to eat or drink at first, but will soon be able to have clear liquids and juice and then regular food. At this point, the drip will be removed.

How long will I stay in hospital after a C-section?

You will usually sleep at the hospital for at least 3 nights after the C-section.



This will allow you time to rest and to heal.

Will I be able to breastfeed after a C-section?

As with any type of birth, breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. It is sometimes challenging to get breastfeeding off to a good start, because your recovery.

You can ask the midwives to help you with breastfeeding.

SPECIAL CARE AFTER A C-SECTION

Even after you go home, you are still recovering from surgery. You may feel tired and sore in your lower belly. It may be difficult or painful for you to walk for long periods, and you will be advised not to lift anything heavy. Ask family and friends to help you so that you can get time to rest and to bond with your baby.

“My operation scar was a bit sore, so I struggled a bit to start breastfeeding. The midwives at the hospital helped me make sure that my baby had a good latch”

Support after a C-section

The early days after any birth are a difficult time for a new mother. You may need special support and someone to talk to. There may be mothers’ groups and counsellors available to help you. You can contact:

FAMSA counselling for couples and families
021 447 7951 (Observatory)
082 231 0373 or 082 231 4470

Lifeline support for personal crisis, trauma, abuse, rape
021 930 0859 (Parow)
021 361 9197 (Khayelitsha)

Parent Centre counselling and info for parents
021 762 0116 (Wynberg)
021 361 9382 (Khayelitsha)

FUTURE PREGNANCIES

Will I be able to have a vaginal birth in the future?

Some women are able to have a vaginal birth after Caesarean (VBAC), but for other women this is not possible. Your chance of a successful VBAC is increased if you have more than a 24 month gap between babies, you are not overweight, you are not pregnant with multiples and your pregnancy is not complicated.

Discuss your birth options with your midwife early in your next pregnancy.

Caesarean-section (C-section)

A Caesarean- section (also called a C-section) is a cut in a woman’s lower belly and uterus to deliver a baby.

A vaginal birth is usually safer for most women and babies. Sometimes a C-section is chosen because it is a safer option, to ensure the best possible health outcomes for the mother and her baby. This could be **planned** (when a C-section is chosen before labour) or **emergency** (when a baby needs to be delivered immediately, in an emergency situation).

WHY DO SOME WOMEN NEED A C-SECTION?

During pregnancy or normal delivery, your doctor or midwife may advise you to have a C-section if:

- You are pregnant with multiples (e.g. twins, triplets)
- Your baby is lying feet first (breech) or side to side (transverse) in your womb
- The placenta (afterbirth) is covering the opening of the womb, the cervix (placenta previa)
- You have had a previous C-section delivery
- A complication develops during labour and it is not safe for the mother or baby to continue with the normal delivery
- You have had a very long labour that is not progressing
- Your baby is in distress

PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Where can I have a C-section?

A C-section must be performed in a hospital that has an operating theatre and doctors who can perform the surgery and anaesthetic (medication to take away the pain). Your midwife will advise you on which facilities can perform C-sections.

It may be difficult for you or your family to accept a C-section in your culture. Arrange for your partner, mother or friend to attend a clinic visit so that they can also understand why you need to have a C-section and have their questions answered.

Can I prepare for an emergency C-section?

No one can predict the need for an emergency C-section. If you are delivering your baby at home or at a clinic that does not have an operating theatre for a C-section, an ambulance will transport you to the nearest hospital that can perform a C-section.

How can I prepare for a planned C-section?

Your midwife will let you know what day your C-section is scheduled at the hospital. You must arrive at the hospital the day before the Caesarean section.

Remember to:

- Bring your hospital bag with all you need for yourself and the baby.
- As with any planned surgery, do not eat or drink anything from midnight before the C-section.
- Plan to stay at the hospital for at least 3 days, you might need to organise for someone else to care for other children at your home.
- Prepare your home so that you have the necessary food for yourself and items for your baby so that you can rest when you get home.

What are the risks of a C-section?

All surgeries have risks such as infection, injury to blood vessels and organs and serious bleeding. But, they can be managed by health workers. For the mother, recovery after a C-section can be longer and more painful than after a vaginal birth. Discuss these risks and any fears you might have with your midwife or doctor.



WHAT IS IT LIKE TO HAVE A C-SECTION?

Will I be awake?

Yes, unless there is a special situation, you will be awake during the operation but free of pain. You can talk with your partner or the anaesthetist.

What happens before the C-section starts?

In preparation for the C-section:

- Your bed will be wheeled in to the clean theatre area where the operation will take place.
- An intravenous (IV) 'drip' will be put into your arm or hand for fluids and medicines.
- An anaesthetist will give you an injection in your back (spinal or epidural anaesthesia) to numb your belly and legs so that you do not feel any pain.
- You will also not be able to move your legs for some hours after this injection.
- A catheter will be inserted in to your bladder to remove urine. This catheter will stay in place for about 12hrs or until you are able to walk on your own to the bathroom
- Your lower abdomen will be shaved and cleaned.
- A curtain/ sheet will be propped up so that you cannot see the lower half of your body.
- Machines will check your blood pressure and oxygen levels.

Who will help at the birth?

Before the surgery starts, many staff may talk to you and introduce themselves to you. The people who will help with the C-section are usually the anaesthetist, the doctor performing the operation, an assisting doctor, a midwife or theatre nurse, an assisting nurse and a doctor or nurse for the baby.

During the surgery, it is good to have a support person such as a partner or a family member to sit next to you on your side of the curtain. The anaesthetic doctor will also stand on your side of the curtain.

Will I feel any pain?

The doctors will only begin the surgery when they have checked that your belly is totally numb. You should not feel pain but you may feel some tugging and pulling. Sometimes the anaesthetic makes women feel like vomiting and the anaesthetist will try and help to treat the nausea.

How long will the C-section take?

It usually takes about 5 - 10 minutes from when the surgery begins to when the baby is born. After that, it takes another 15 minutes to 45 minutes to carefully close the wounds.

"It helped to have my husband next to me the whole time. Together, we really enjoyed the birth, even though it was by operation"

What happens to my baby after the C-section?

Once the baby is born, the doctor or midwife may show the baby to you and will then put the baby on a changing table to do a quick check on the baby's breathing, colour and heart rate. Once the baby is stable, the baby will be wrapped and brought to you or your partner to hold. Sometimes the baby will be placed on your chest because early skin to skin contact after birth is healthy for babies.