HEALTH CITY
Cayman Islands

# Postnatal Care After Caesarean Section Delivery



This booklet will take you through your Postnatal Care After Caesarean Section Delivery.

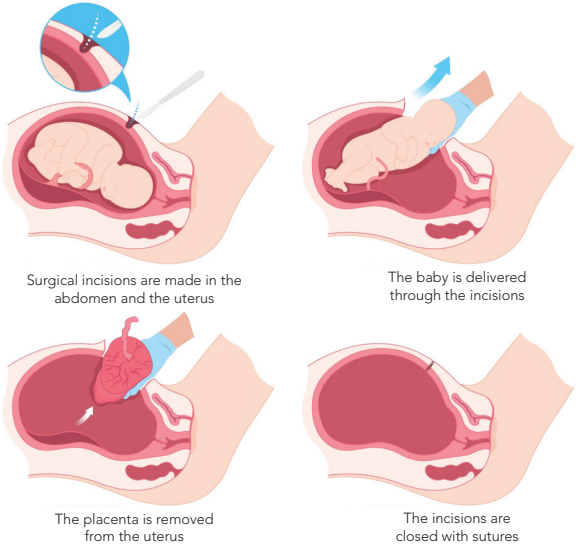
# Understanding Caesarean Sections

A Caesarean section (C-section) is a major operation where a surgical incision is made to access your uterus. The incision goes through five layers: skin, fat, muscle, peritoneum, and womb.

Because of this, recovery takes longer than after a vaginal birth.

- Recovery usually takes around 6 weeks.
- The skin usually heals within a few days.
- Internal healing can take up to 3 months.

## Caesarean Sections



# What to Expect After a C-section

## Your Surgical Wound

- The wound is usually a 10 to 20 cm cut across your lower abdomen (bikini line).
- Most stitches are dissolvable and do not need to be removed.
- Sometimes stitches may need to be removed by a doctor.

## Catheter

- A catheter (tube) will be placed in your bladder for about 12 hours after surgery.
- You will then be encouraged to pass urine.

## Pain

- Pain is normal after surgery and can usually be controlled with medication.
- Small movements (like turning in bed or coughing) can feel sore; this may last for a few weeks.
- Do not take your own medication while in hospital. Speak to your doctor or midwife if pain is not well controlled.

### Vaginal Bleeding and Discharge

After a C-section, vaginal bleeding is normal. This happens because your uterus is shedding its lining after pregnancy.

- Bleeding can last up to 6 weeks and should gradually become lighter.
- You may need to change pads every few hours in the first few days.

Speak to your midwife if:

- You soak a pad within an hour.
- You pass large clots.

## Wound Dressing

- A dressing will be placed over your wound after surgery.
- It usually stays in place for 48 hours (unless you have a PICO dressing).
- After 48 hours, it will be changed to a waterproof dressing.
- This dressing can stay for up to 7 days if there are no concerns.
- It will be removed by your doctor or midwife around day 7.



# PICO Dressing (If You Have One)

Some patients are given a PICO dressing to reduce the risk of infection.

**This dressing:**

- Applies gentle pressure to help healing
- Removes moisture
- Improves blood flow
- Helps prevent infection.

**What to expect:**

- You will go home with the PICO dressing in place.
- It will be removed after 7–10 days.

The PICO device is not waterproof.

**Before showering:**

- Disconnect the device by unscrewing it from the tubing.
- Place it somewhere safe.

**After showering:**

- Reconnect it.
- Press the orange button to turn it back on.



# How to Care for Your Wound

**Dos**

- Wash your wound daily with plain water.
- Take showers instead of baths.
- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Pat dry with a clean towel (different from what you use for the rest of your body).
- Let the wound air dry if possible.
- Wash your hands before and after touching your wound.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Use large maternity underwear that does not rub the wound.
- Support your wound with a towel when coughing, laughing, or moving.

**Don'ts**

- Do not pull your stitches.
- A stitch may appear at the surface. This is normal and will fall away.
- Do not rub or massage the wound.
- Do not apply soaps, oils, or powders directly on the wound.
- Do not soak the wound in water.
- Do not wear tight clothing over the wound.

# Reducing the Risk of Infection

**You may have a higher risk of infection if you:**

- Are overweight
- Smoke
- Have diabetes
- Have a poor diet.

**To reduce your risk:**

- Get plenty of rest.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby.
- Avoid driving or heavy activity for 12 weeks.

## Signs of Infection – When to Get Help

**Contact your doctor or midwife if you notice:**

- Increasing pain in your wound
- Redness, heat, or swelling
- A bad smell from the wound
- Yellow or green discharge or pus
- The wound opening
- Feeling unwell or having a fever.



# Returning to Normal Activities

You can return to activities gradually when you feel ready. Everyone recovers differently. However:

- Avoid heavy lifting, vacuuming, ironing, or heavy housework.
- Avoid these activities for up to 12 weeks.

Take your time and increase activity slowly.

## Sex and Contraception

- It is usually recommended to wait 6 weeks before resuming intercourse, to allow healing and bleeding to settle. This depends on your recovery. You will be advised at your 6-week post-delivery appointment.
- You can become pregnant again very soon after birth, even if breastfeeding.
- You must always use contraception if you do not want to have another baby quickly, as you can conceive any time after birth, even if you are breastfeeding and your periods have not started again yet. It's important to start using contraception within 21 days of giving birth to avoid a new pregnancy. Talk to your midwife or doctor about a method that's best for you.

### Driving

- Check with your insurance provider before driving.
- It is usually advised to wait about 1 month.

## Symptoms to Report Urgently

Contact your doctor immediately if you are feeling unwell or have:

- Fever or are feeling hot
- New or worsening pain
- Redness, swelling, or discharge from your wound
- Swelling or pain in your legs
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain when breathing.

## Future Pregnancies

- About 70% of women who have had a C-section can have a vaginal birth in the future.
- Some women may need another C-section.

It is recommended to wait at least 1 year before your next pregnancy. This allows your body and scar to fully heal.

# FAQs

**These are some common questions about Postnatal Care after Caesarean Section (C-section) Delivery.**

### Q: Is it normal for my scar to feel numb, itchy, or tingly?

**A:** Yes. These sensations are common as nerves heal after surgery and may last for several weeks or months.

### Q: Why does my abdomen still feel swollen or look pregnant?

**A:** This is normal. Your muscles and tissues have stretched during pregnancy and surgery. Swelling and the appearance of a 'tummy' will gradually improve over time.

### Q: What is the best way to get out of bed after a C-section?

**A:** Roll onto your side first, then use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position. This helps reduce strain on your abdomen.

### Q: Can I sleep on my side after a C-section?

**A:** Yes. Many people find side sleeping more comfortable. Use pillows to support your abdomen and body.

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