

Delivering your baby if you have had a previous Caesarean Section

The chances of having a vaginal delivery after a caesarean section are good depending on the reason for the first caesarean section. In considering whether to have a vaginal delivery you will need to take a number of factors into consideration, these include

- The reason you had your caesarean section
- Whether you have had a previous vaginal birth
- Whether there were any complications at the time or during your recovery
- The type of cut that was made in your uterus (womb)
- How you felt about your previous birth
- Whether your current pregnancy has been straightforward, or whether there have been any problems or complications
- How many more babies you are hoping to have in future; the risks increase with each caesarean section, so if you plan to have more babies it may be better to try to avoid another caesarean section if possible.

About **three out of four women** will be able to have a vaginal birth after Caesarean and this goes up to nine out of ten women if they have had a previous vaginal birth. However, we will discuss your individual choices with you.

What are the advantages of a vaginal delivery?

- It's the natural way to deliver your baby
- There is no need for an operation
- You are more likely to be able to have vaginal births in the future
- It involves a shorter stay in hospital
- You can return to normal activity after a short while
- More success with breast feeding

What are the disadvantages of a vaginal birth?

- It is difficult to predict when you might deliver the baby
- You may sustain a tear to your perineum during the birth of your baby
- We will need to monitor your baby's heartbeat continuously during labour
- You may still need a caesarean section
- There is a 1 in 200 risk of the scar on the womb opening during labour (called a rupture). This can be more likely if you receive drugs to induce labour or increase contractions, or if the interval between caesareans is less than about 15 months. An emergency caesarean is needed in this situation as the baby can become distressed.
- The risk of your baby dying or being brain damaged if you aim for vaginal birth after a caesarean is very small (two in 1000 women or 0.2%). This is NOT higher than if you were labouring for the first time, but it is higher than if you have an elective repeat caesarean delivery (one in 1000 or 0.1%). However, this has to be balanced against the risks to you if you have a caesarean delivery

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When is vaginal birth not recommended?

- If you have had three or more previous caesarean deliveries
- You have had a uterine rupture during a previous labour
- Your previous caesarean section was 'classical' incision, this mean the uterine scar is straight up and down
- There are other concerns with your pregnancy that require a planned caesarean section

What are the advantages of having a Caesarean section?

- You have a planned delivery date between 39 and 40 weeks
- There is no labour pain as long as you have not started to labour prior to the operation
- You avoid labour complications

What are the disadvantages of a Caesarean section?

- The operation is a major surgical procedure
- There is a risk of bleeding, infection and/or damage to the bladder
- Babies born via caesarean section have an increased risk of respiratory concerns
- Your hospital stay will be between two to five days, longer if there are complications. You will also have a painful wound. Your recovery period will be longer and you may need extra help with activities at home.
- You will not be able to drive for about 6 weeks after surgery (please check with your insurance company).
- Once you have had two Caesareans then your chances of needing another one for medical reasons are increased in later pregnancies. More scar tissue develops after every caesarean section. This increases the possibility of placenta accreta or percreta, this happens when the placenta grows into your scar making it difficult to remove at any future deliveries. This can result in bleeding, blood transfusion and may require a hysterectomy.
- The risks of blood clots in the veins, lungs and damage to other internal organs is also increased

If you would like a vaginal birth but have had more than one caesarean section delivery, you will have a detailed discussion with a senior obstetrician about the potential risks, benefits and success in relation to your obstetric and medical history.

Can I have pain relief?

There are a number of options for pain relief during labour. A leaflet explaining these choices is available, please ask a member of staff for a copy of the leaflet – pain relief in labour.

Can I be mobile during labour?

We recommend that you have your baby's heartbeat monitored all the time during labour as there is a small risk the scar of your womb opening up. Wireless fetal monitors are available to enable greater freedom of movement, however due to the small numbers available you may be offered a wired system. Wired systems do reduce your mobility but you will be encouraged to use a variety of aids to ensure that you are comfortable e.g. birthing ball, mat, cub, chair or bed. Also if wireless monitoring is available you may also have the option of a water birth.

If I want a normal delivery and I don't go into labour will I be induced?

Normal labour is preferable to being induced and results in a higher chance of successful vaginal delivery. Therefore you can discuss with your doctor if you would like to wait for

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labour to start naturally. You could consider having your labour induced, however this can cause an increased chance of the scar on the womb opening up during labour (rupture). For this reason, the decision to have labour induced after 41 weeks should be carefully discussed with your doctors. You can also choose to have a planned caesarean section if you wish.

Contact details

If you want to talk over any of the points raised in this leaflet, please ask your community midwife – you will have her number on your pregnancy Health Records. Alternatively you can speak to someone in the maternity department at the hospital:

Heartlands Hospital	0121 424 3514
Solihull Hospital	0121 424 5052
Good Hope Hospital	0121 424 7201

You can also speak to your obstetric consultant or contact one of the consultant midwives based at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital or Good Hope Hospital.

Further Sources of Information

For further information about caesarean section and related topics you can contact:

National Childbirth Trust

Alexandra House

Oldham Terrace

Acton London W3 6NH

Enquiry Line: 0870 444 8707 (9am-5pm Mon-Thurs, 9am-4pm Fri)

www.infochoice.org

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/birth-after-previous-caesarean-information-you>

Our commitment to confidentiality

We keep personal and clinical information about you to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment. Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We will share information with other parts of the NHS to support your healthcare needs, and we will inform your GP of your progress unless you ask us not to. If we need to share information that identifies you with other organisations we will ask for your consent. You can help us by pointing out any information in your records which is wrong or needs updating.

Additional Sources of Information:

Go online and view NHS Choices website for more information about a wide range of health topics <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

You may want to visit one of our Health Information Centres located in:

- Main Entrance at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital Tel: 0121 424 2280
 - Treatment Centre at Good Hope Hospital Tel: 0121 424 9946
 - Clinic Entrance Solihull Hospital Tel: 0121 424 5616
- or contact us by email: healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk.

Information for Patients

Dear Patient

We welcome your views on what you thought of this patient information leaflet, also any suggestions on how you feel we can improve through our feedback link below:

- Patient Information Feedback email:
patientinformationleafletfeedback@heartofengland.nhs.uk

If you wish to make any other comments this can be done through the links listed below:

- Patient Opinion: www.patientopinion.org.uk
- I want great care: www.iwantgreatcare.org (Here you can leave feedback about your doctor)

Be helpful and respectful: think about what people might want to know about our patient information and this hospital and how your experiences might benefit others. Remember your words must be polite and respectful, and you cannot name individuals on the sites.

If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or your treatment or if there is anything you do not understand and you wish to know more about please write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.

