



Information for
patients and
carers

Frequently Asked Questions
After Caesarean

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The first few days after my Caesarean

How will I manage my pain?

It is important that your pain does not stop you moving around, breathing deeply or coughing. Please tell your midwife if you are having difficulty with any of these issues.

As well as pain around the wound you are likely to experience trapped wind, a common complaint after a Caesarean. This may be experienced as bloating, sharp pains in your abdomen, or even pain in your upper body or shoulder. This tends to occur in the first 2- 4 days after your Caesarean.

Please continue to take your prescribed medication and painkillers at home.

Do not exceed the following dosages:

- Dihydrocodeine: 60mg (2 tablets) can be taken up to 4 times per day
- Ibuprofen: 400mg can be taken up to 4 times per day for 2 weeks. If necessary, as this has been advised from hospital this can be increased to 4 times in 24 hours.
- Paracetamol: 1g (2 tablets) can be taken up to 4 times per day for 2 weeks

We would advise:-

- That the dihydrocodeine needs to be taken 1 tablet (30mg) regularly every 6 hours for the first few days, using a second tablet in between for breakthrough pain
- That paracetamol and ibuprofen are taken regularly for the first few days too

Dihydrocodeine should be stopped as soon as you can manage without it. It can cause constipation which can then add to your discomfort. It can also make you feel dizzy and nauseous.

Once you have reached the first week after your Caesarean, we would expect most women to only be requiring paracetamol and ibuprofen. However, we all have different levels of pain and how to cope with it, so this may not be the case for you.

There is a very small risk that if you continue to take Dihydrocodeine once lactation has started (your milk has “come in”) that your baby may experience:

- Drowsiness
- Poor feeding
- Slow heart rate
- Breathing difficulties

If you notice any of these signs, you should stop taking the tablets immediately and contact your doctor.

The UK Medicines Information Service considers ibuprofen suitable for use by breastfeeding mothers as very little of the drug passes into breastmilk. Paracetamol in recommended doses can be used if you are breastfeeding.

Peppermint sweets, mint tea or peppermint cordial with hot water and walking around really help with trapped wind pain.

If you feel that your pain is not adequately controlled, please contact your GP.

Getting in and out of bed

Getting in and out of bed can be difficult or uncomfortable while you are recovering from your Caesarean.

You may find it easier to get out of bed by drawing your legs up, by bending at the knees whilst holding your lower tummy area. Then rolling on to your side and dropping both legs over the side of the bed. You can then push yourself up sideways into a sitting position. Rest there for a few seconds before standing. When you stand, try to stand up as straight as you can. This will help strengthen your tummy muscles.

You can do the opposite to get back into bed.

What to eat after a Caesarean

A healthy diet with lots of fruit and vegetables is important after a Caesarean. It will help maintain vitamins and iron that you need especially if breast feeding. Vitamin C is really important to aid healing and iron is important to help replace any blood you may have lost. Vitamin C can be found in many fruits but particularly oranges, melon and strawberries. Iron can be found in red meats and broccoli. A healthy diet will also help to prevent constipation. Try to avoid fizzy drinks and fried food as these can cause gas and add to your discomfort.

You can go back to your normal diet when you are feeling better and your digestive system is back to normal. We would advise that a good diet is important to keep you well and further information can be found on <https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html>



Although a dose of antibiotics is given at the time of your Caesarean it is not necessary for you to have probiotics afterwards, but you may if you wish.

Drinking lots of fluid is important to ensure you do not become dehydrated. It also prevents constipation. Breast feeding can make you feel very thirsty.

Caffeine products can enter your breast milk and irritate your

baby and affect their sleep. Try to limit your caffeine intake to less than 2 cups of coffee or 3 - 4 cups of tea a day. Remember caffeine is also present in some energy and cola drinks so try to limit these or even try caffeine free. Regular fizzy drinks contain a lot of sugar so be careful with how much you have. Although what you drink is your personal preference, water is a good way to keep hydrated.

Your wound

Your wound will feel sore and bruised for a few weeks. In the few days after your Caesarean the stitches may feel as if they are pulling and tight. This will settle down as you heal. You may even find that the wound feels itchy. It is also likely that the skin around the wound will feel numb. This numb area will take several months to return to normal, and the actual scar area itself may never feel as it did before the surgery.

The stitches used vary. Some may need to be removed; others dissolve and do not need to be removed. You will be advised before you leave hospital which is the case for you.

Your community midwife, who visits you, will check your wound and, if necessary, remove the stitches at the right time. You should observe your wound for signs of infection too.

The signs to look for are:

- your pain relief is not keeping your pain under control, or your pain is getting worse
- your wound is red, swollen, hot to touch or painful
- your wound is bleeding, oozing or has a discharge, or you are worried it is not healing properly
- you have a high temperature
- you feel generally unwell

Please contact maternity triage (01772 524495) or your

community midwife if you experience any of these symptoms. You may find it more comfortable to wear “Big Knickers” after your Caesarean so that they do not rub your wound. You should also try to wear loose fitting comfortable clothes so that your wound is not irritated.

It is not necessary for you to use any special washing products, creams or ointments to assist the healing of your wound or reduce scar tissue.

Your wound should fade to a fine line over time.

Breast feeding

Breast feeding is for any new mother a skill to achieve but well worth it! You are just as likely to be able to breast feed after a Caesarean as after a vaginal birth.

Before you leave hospital, the staff will have assisted you with breast feeding and positions which may be easier for you. The best position is the one that is most comfortable for you. After a Caesarean in the first few days this may be lying on your side.

You may need to support your baby with a blanket underneath them or behind them. An alternative position is sitting, with a pillow on your tummy and baby lying on that pillow.

Your midwife who visits you at home will be able to give you advice if you are finding it difficult. You can also contact the Families and Babies (FAB) team who can provide support and advice both in person and over the phone – 01254 772929

There is lots of guidance and information online relating to breastfeeding. For helpful hints and tips please take a look at the following website.

<http://www.nhs.uk/start4life/breastfeeding>



Skin-to-skin contact

In the hours, days, weeks and months after having your baby, you can carry on having skin-to-skin with your baby whenever you want to, and for as long as your baby is happy with it. Skin-to-skin can help to calm your baby when they are hungry or upset. Your midwife or health visitor can help you with skin-to-skin so please do ask.

Preventing blood clots

Although you have had a Caesarean you should try to keep mobile and avoid lying or sitting for prolonged periods. You will have been given compression stockings to wear. You should continue to wear these stockings until you are fully mobile after your Caesarean, so for example going out of the house to shop.

Those women who are assessed as being at increased risk of blood clot formation following surgery will require regular anti-clotting injections for up to 6 weeks. We will teach you how to do this yourself if you need to carry on with the injections after you go home. If you're worried about doing the injections yourself, you can ask your partner, a family member or friend to do it for you.

Please be aware they'll need to be available to give you the injection at the same time each day.

Vaginal bleeding after a Caesarean

It is normal to have vaginal bleeding after all births, including Caesareans. This bleeding is called "lochia".

It usually lasts for between 2 and 6 weeks.

The bleeding may be quite heavy for the first day and is either red or brownish-red in colour. Sometimes you may pass small blood clots in the first day or two.

Over the next few weeks, the bleeding should get less heavy and the colour should be a lighter pink or brown. The bleeding may get heavier and look a brighter red colour for a short time after you breastfeed. You may experience a cramping feeling like a period pain when this happens. This is because breastfeeding helps your womb to return to its normal size by making your womb tighten and contract

You may find the amount of lochia gets heavier if you have “over done it”!

If the lochia starts to smell unpleasant or becomes heavier please let your midwife or GP know as it may be a sign of infection.

To reduce the chance of infection:

- use maternity pads NOT tampons
- change your pad each time you visit the toilet
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after changing your pad

When can I have a bath or shower?

You will have a dressing over your wound. The dressing is waterproof, so you can bath or shower as normal. You may find a shower is easier so as to avoid bending. Please avoid fragranced shower or bath products in the first few weeks.

The dressing is most commonly removed at about 5 days. You can either remove the dressing yourself in the shower or let your midwife remove it when she visits. If you feel your dressing needs changing at any point in the first 5 days please contact your community midwife.

Once the dressing is removed you can shower or bath too. Be careful to ensure your wound is dried well.

Lifting

Initially you should not lift anything heavier than your baby. This is obviously difficult if you have a toddler at home. It also means you should not vacuum for a few weeks.

Don't lift anything heavy for at least the first two months.

Toddlers are heavy. Please remember, in this time after you have had your Caesarean you can sit with them or someone can pass them to you whilst you are sitting or lying. We appreciate entirely that you want them to be involved with the new baby too.

Once you feel able to lift your toddler you may find it easier to sit down in a chair and get your toddler to sit on your knee before standing up with them, or to get your toddler to stand on the second or third step of a staircase before lifting them.

Emotions

Having a baby and a Caesarean in particular, can cause lots of emotions for which you might not feel prepared. In the hours, days and weeks after a Caesarean take time to sit and bond with your baby. Ensure you use all the help available to you from family members and friends – don't be afraid to ask.

If you had an emergency Caesarean or complications, then this will have been discussed with you before you leave hospital. Birth after thoughts is a service we provide to allow you to discuss this at a further date. Your community midwife can organise this for you.

Talking about it does help.

Exercising after a Caesarean

You may have got into the habit of stooping, particularly if the stitches in your scar feel sore. It's natural to feel vulnerable about your tummy after such a major operation, but stooping can lead to back pain, and can make your tummy stick out.

You should practice standing up properly, as much, and as often, as possible. This will also strengthen your stomach muscles and protect your back. Let your shoulders relax down as you do this and breathe out slowly.

Pelvic Floor exercises

Your pelvic floor muscles have been weakened from being pregnant so it is important to aim to do some pelvic floor exercises daily - for life.

After your Caesarean, you can start to exercise your pelvic floor once your catheter has been removed and as soon as you feel ready. These exercises will help strengthen the muscles that support your womb, bowels and bladder. This may help you manage any problems with leaking urine.

To perform pelvic floor exercises imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind by squeezing the muscles inside your back passage (not the cheeks of your bottom) and then imagine trying to stop the flow of urine at the same time. The feeling is of squeeze and lift, both upwards and forwards. Continue to lift for as long as you can, aiming for 10 seconds.

Release and rest for a few seconds, then repeat as many times as you can, aiming for 10 repetitions.

Follow this with 10 fast squeeze/releases. You should aim practice this 3 times a day. You can aim to build up to repeating

the exercise 4 – 6 times a day.

The best way to remember to do them is to link them with something you do daily (feeding baby, brushing teeth, having a shower or bath, watching TV). Ask your midwife or the physiotherapist if you need help getting this right.

If you are unsure if you are doing this correctly, you can check this yourself, by using a small mirror to look at your perineum (the area between your vagina and back passage). When you do a pelvic floor contraction you should see the perineum move inwards and upwards away from the mirror. It should not bulge down. Or, you can try hooking a finger or thumb into the side wall of your vagina, and when you do a pelvic contraction, you should feel a tightening around your finger/thumb if you are doing this correctly.

Once you are confident with these exercises try combining them with the abdominal exercises below.

Abdominal exercises

These exercises will help to strengthen the muscles in your abdomen (tummy area). This will help you to protect your spine and have good posture.

- Lie on your side and slightly bend your knees
- Relax your abdominal muscles and breathe in gently
- As you breathe out, gently pull in your abdominal muscles
- At the same time, squeeze your pelvic floor muscles
- Hold in your abdominal muscles and squeeze your pelvic floor for 10 seconds, then gently release
- Repeat this exercise 10 times

- Try to do this exercise three times a day

Pelvic floor and abdominal exercises are the start of your core stability work which is really important after having a baby.

A recommended web site for essential exercises and advice after childbirth is <https://pogp.csp.org.uk/publications/fit-future>



You are able to self-refer to the physiotherapy department for up to 6 weeks after having your baby if you need any advice or help regarding pelvic floor or weak separated abdominal muscles. This is done via email coretherapies@lthtr.nhs.uk

The next weeks after my Caesarean

Increasing exercise

Walking is really beneficial after a Caesarean. It improves your posture and your pelvic floor. It is also really good for your baby and gives you time to take fresh air and relax mentally. You should build up the amount you do each day.

Most women wait until their six-week check before starting any more physical exercise. Exercise that works your heart and lungs (aerobic) will also help you return to fitness and build strength. Ease yourself back into this type of exercise after your postnatal check, if your GP says it's OK.

Brisk walking, swimming, or cycling, will help you to shed some baby weight. You may only be able to do 10 minutes of exercise to begin with, but you will gradually get stronger.

Core stability postnatal exercise classes or pilates based exercise classes can be attended from 8 weeks after you have had your baby. This we would recommend.

The effects of pregnancy hormones can affect your joints for up to

six months after birth, so wait before doing any high-impact activities such as running, aerobics classes, and similar. Pregnancy lasts nine months, so allow yourself at least the same length of time to get back to normal.

After four months to six months, you should be able to begin exercises that strengthen your coreabdominal muscles.

Start slowly and gradually increase how hard you work and how long you exercise for. Always listen to your body. Your scar and your stomach muscles react best to consistent, regular exercise – not training to exhaustion.

Driving

You should avoid driving a car while you are recovering from your Caesarean. For some women, this may be six weeks or longer. You might also find that some of the painkillers you are taking make you a bit drowsy or lightheaded which will make it unsafe for you to drive.

Please make sure you are well enough before you start driving and check that your insurance company is happy for you to drive.

Sexual relations

It takes your body about six weeks to heal the inside of the womb. This is why all women are advised to avoid intercourse and the use of tampons until they have had their six-week checkup after having their baby.

Pregnancy and childbirth change the way your body looks and feels. You may not feel body confident, you may feel time pressured. Listen to your body for when the time is right. In the period of time when you and your baby have returned home don't forget your partner. Remember you both need love and support.

Ongoing emotions and self-care

It is natural to feel sad or tearful after having a baby. Many women feel varying emotions about having a Caesarean. Sometimes this can last longer than expected after the hormonal changes that occur after having your baby.

It is also natural to feel sad or upset about the changes to your body when you have had a baby.

But if you continue to have negative feelings, or if you get new symptoms after the first two weeks, please ensure you talk to your health visitor or GP. Symptoms of postnatal depression may include:

- low mood
- not getting pleasure from activities you usually enjoy
- lack of confidence in yourself
- blaming yourself or having strong feelings of guilt
- not being able to concentrate on anything
- not sleeping or eating properly
- thinking about harming yourself or your baby

For more information relating to postnatal depression visit the following website
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-natal-depression>



It is important for you to recognise that a Caesarean is major surgery, and it will take time for your body to recover. Make sure you take care of yourself, accept help from others and try to eat well, drink plenty of fluids and get as much rest as you can; your health is just as important as your baby's. Take each day step by

step, and learn to adjust to your new baby. Take your time and don't put too much pressure on yourself.

Your next period

Your periods are dependent on hormonal changes, so the timing of the return of your period will not be affected by a Caesarean. Once your hormone levels return to the same levels they were before pregnancy your periods will start once again. It's hard to be exact about this timing as everyone is different.

If you bottle feed your baby, or combine bottle feeding with breastfeeding, your first period may start as soon as 5 to 6 weeks after you give birth.

If you fully breastfeed (including at night) without any bottle feeding, your periods may not start again until you stop breastfeeding, or until you stop night-time breastfeeding. This is because the hormone that causes your body to make breast milk can stop your body making the hormones that control your periods.

As your baby starts breastfeeding less often, you may start "spotting. Spotting is a light and irregular period that usually appears as spots of blood.

Planning for the next baby

It is important to discuss contraception with your midwife while she is visiting you, and with your doctor at your postnatal appointment. You can be fertile as soon as 21 days after having a baby. Breastfeeding can be used as a contraception, but certain other factors must be met for it to be reliable.

It is advisable to avoid pregnancy for at least one year after your Caesarean, to make sure your womb is healed

and your body has time to recover. Further information on contraception can be obtained from the links on page 18.

When planning your next baby, you are very likely to be able to have a vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC). This does however depend very much on individual circumstances. Please discuss this with your midwife or obstetrician during your next pregnancy so that you feel able to make an informed choice.

Lastly

We hope this has given you the information you need. For the first 30 days after baby is born you can contact maternity triage (01772 524495) with any concerns relating to yourself. After this time you are best to contact your GP.

Other helpful contacts:

Lancashire teaching Hospitals Maternity Services, maternity leaflets, postnatal and baby care:

<https://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/maternity-leaflets>



Breastfeeding Support

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-help-and-support/>



<https://www.familiesandbabies.org.uk/>



Your Contraception Guide

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/>



<https://www.fpa.org.uk/download/your-guide-to-contraceptive-choices-after-a-baby/>



Food facts

<https://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html>



Exercise

Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological
physiotherapy – Fit for the Future.
Essential Exercises and Advice after
Childbirth

<https://pogp.csp.org.uk/publications/fit-future>



Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact

Community Midwives 01772 524592 / 01257 245116

Maternity Triage 01772 524495

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਯਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لئے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو یئچھیا یں یہ ابی دست بو یسکت ہے برا ء مہر یبان پو یچھہی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعه بأ حروف كبيره و بلغات إذا كنت تر بد مساعده في فهم هذه المعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمكن تو فسير هذه المعلومات

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