

After a Cesarean Section

What you can do to decrease risks for you and your future pregnancies



Things to do **EVERY DAY**
for healthy women and babies:

Exercise – 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week

Vitamin – 400 micrograms (mcg) of Folic Acid per day

Educate yourself about medicines and chemicals that can cause birth defects

Reproductive life planning – set your personal goals for birth control and future children

Yearly doctor visits to discuss physical and mental wellness

Diet – Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains daily

Avoid tobacco, drugs, and alcohol

Your partner, friends, and family should be sources of support

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Things to think about after your cesarean section (c-section)

- It's best to wait 18 months before getting pregnant again so that your body and your scar can heal. Use birth control to time your next pregnancy.
- If you want to get pregnant again, it is important to know what type of incision (cut) was made during your c-section. Some types of cuts have more risks if you want to have a vaginal birth in your next pregnancy. During your c-section, one cut was made in your belly and one was made in your uterus (womb), so you can't tell what kind of cut you had by only looking at the scar on your belly. Your health care provider can tell you what kind of incision you had by looking at the records from your delivery.

Birth options after a c-section

- You may have a choice about how to deliver your next baby. You may choose to have another c-section. This is called an elective repeat cesarean delivery. Or you may choose to try a vaginal birth after cesarean section (called VBAC). Talk to your provider about what's best for you.

During your next pregnancy: VBAC or repeat c-section?

- Many women can safely have a VBAC depending on the type of cut they had during their original c-section.
- If you've ever had a baby vaginally, you're more likely to be able to have a vaginal birth again.
- You may still need to have a c-section after trying a VBAC because of a problem during labor. Because each birth is different, no provider can tell you now that you can have a VBAC for sure next time.
- A risk of trying a VBAC is uterine rupture (when the c-section scar on the uterus opens). Uterine rupture is rare but can lead to serious infection and bleeding; surgery is required to repair the rupture.
- Each added c-section scar in the uterus raises your risk of problems in the next pregnancy, so be sure to talk to your provider about these risks.

If you're thinking about having another baby, talk to your provider about your options.

Remember your ABCs:

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For more information, go to:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:
acog.org/publications/faq/faq070.cfm

Every Woman California: everywomanocalifornia.org

March of Dimes: marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/csection_indepth.html