

Cesarean Birth



In a Cesarean birth, the doctor makes a surgical incision in your abdomen and uterus and removes the baby. You should keep in mind that a Cesarean birth is always a possibility, although for many women that possibility is a small one.

Reasons for a Cesarean Birth

- In some situations the need for a Cesarean can be predicted in advance and you will have a chance to prepare for it. For example:
 - ▶ Breech position (baby positioned with feet or buttocks first)
 - ▶ Transverse position (baby positioned sideways in abdomen)
- In other situations the decision for a Cesarean will be made by the doctor, if there is an emergency problem during labor. For example:
 - ▶ Small pelvic opening and large baby
 - ▶ Fetal distress which means the baby may not be tolerating labor
 - ▶ Bleeding from your vagina may mean there is a problem with the placenta and your baby may not be getting enough blood, oxygen and nutrients through the umbilical cord
- Other reasons for a Cesarean Birth may include:
 - ▶ Medical problems such as diabetes or high blood pressure
 - ▶ Active viral infections involving the cervix, vagina or labia (lips of vagina), such as herpes

Preparation for Cesarean Birth

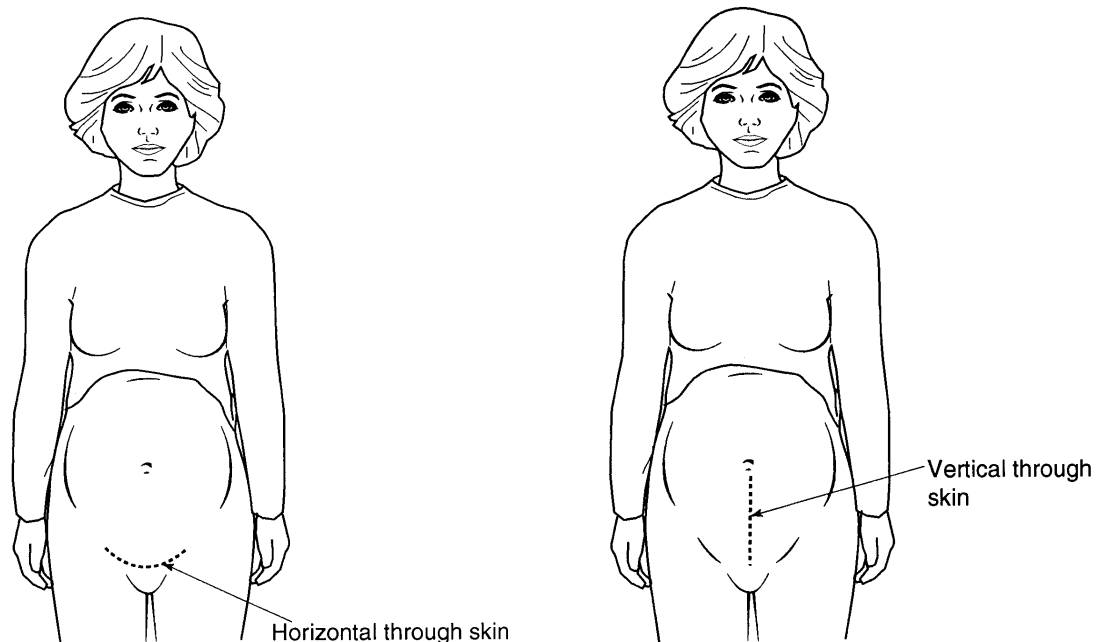
Before a Cesarean is done you may have the following done:

- Sign permission for the operation
- Blood drawn
- Abdomen washed and shaved
- An IV started and a urinary catheter inserted

Talk with the anesthesiologist about whether you will have local anesthesia and be awake, or be asleep during the cesarean.

The Cesarean Birth

A cut is made through the wall of the abdomen and the uterus. These cuts (incisions) may be up and down (vertical) or across (transverse). The baby and placenta are delivered through the incision within a few minutes of the start of surgery. The incisions are then closed, which takes about one hour. After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery room.



During this time your blood pressure, pulse, respiratory rate and dressing over your incision will be checked frequently. You will be watched for too much vaginal bleeding.

Post-operative Care

- You will usually stay in bed 6 - 8 hours after surgery. You will then be encouraged to move about with help.
- The catheter will be removed soon after surgery. The IV will continue until you are able to eat and drink.
- Medicine for pain relief will be given when you want it.
- In most cases, women leave the hospital 2 - 4 days after a Cesarean birth.
- Cesarean birth does not interfere with breastfeeding your baby, although it makes it harder to position. Use a lot of pillows.
- You will need more rest than the woman who delivers vaginally. It takes 4 - 6 weeks before you are back to full activity. (See handouts, **Your Recovery After a Cesarean Section** and **Exercises After a Cesarean Birth**)

Future Pregnancies

Some women may be able to deliver vaginally with future pregnancies even though they have had a Cesarean birth. Discuss this with your doctor. (See handout, **Vaginal Birth After a Cesarean** for more information.)

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.