

# Elective Caesarean Section

OG03 Lite - Expires end of January 2026



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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## What is an elective caesarean section?

A caesarean section is a procedure to deliver a baby by a surgical procedure. Elective means that it is planned before you go into labour.

## Why do I need a caesarean section?

The following are the more common reasons why a caesarean section may be recommended:

- Your baby is positioned in a way other than head down.
- Your baby is not growing properly or is distressed.
- The placenta is lying in front of your baby and either completely or partly over your cervix, preventing a vaginal birth.
- You have had a caesarean section before.
- You have a multiple pregnancy.
- You have a particular complication of pregnancy.
- The placenta has become too firmly attached to your womb (uterus) so it will not separate naturally.
- You have medical problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes.

In your case a caesarean section is the safest method of delivery for both you and your baby.

## Are there any alternatives?

The alternatives are normal labour or induced labour (where medication is used to get labour started) followed by a vaginal delivery.

## What does the procedure involve?

Almost all caesarean sections are performed under regional anaesthesia (either a spinal or epidural anaesthetic). This means you will be awake so you can see your baby.

The procedure usually takes less than an hour.

Your obstetrician will make a low horizontal cut on your 'bikini' line. They will separate the muscles of your abdominal wall and open your

uterus. Your obstetrician will deliver your baby through the cut.

After the delivery, they will repair your uterus and abdomen.

A midwife will be with you throughout the procedure and a paediatrician may also attend to your baby when it is born.

## What complications can happen?

Possible complications of this procedure are shown below. Some may be serious and can even be life threatening.

### General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Developing a hernia in the scar
- Venous thromboembolism
- Chest infection

### Specific complications of this procedure

- Infection in your uterus
- Bladder damage
- Heavy bleeding
- Small scratch on your baby's skin
- Breathing difficulties for your baby where your baby takes longer than normal to clear the fluid from their lungs
- Effect on future fertility or pregnancy

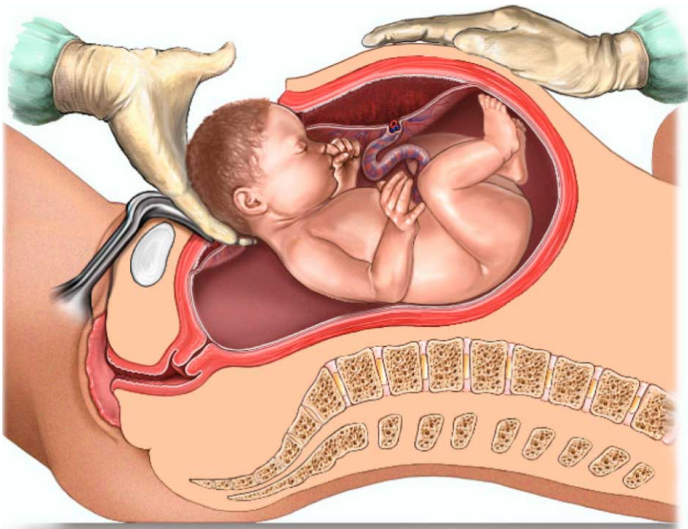
### Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Scarring of your skin, which can be unsightly

## What happens after the procedure?

You will be able to go home when the healthcare team feel you are medically fit enough, which is usually after 1 to 3 days.

Your obstetrician and the healthcare team will tell you when you can return to normal activities.



A caesarean section

Bleeding usually lasts for 2 to 4 weeks.

Do not lift anything heavy or do strenuous exercise for 6 weeks. Do not push, pull or carry anything heavier than your baby during this time.

Most women take at least 3 months to recover from the procedure.

## Summary

A caesarean section is a common procedure and is usually a safe method of delivery for you and your baby.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

## Acknowledgements

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