

# Preparing for Your C-Section

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University of Washington  
Medical Center



# In the Weeks Before

- Talk with your doctor about your birth control plan
- Sign consents for surgery
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Choose your *pediatrician* (doctor for your new baby)



# Showers Before Your C-section

Your nurse will give you a packet with 2 chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) cloths.

## Shower #1: Night Before Surgery

- Use your regular soap (such as Dial). Clean your body well. Do **not** shave any area of your body that is near the surgical site. Dry off with a clean towel.
- Then, use one of the CHG cloths to wipe the **front of your body**. Wipe from below your breasts, over your abdomen, and down to your upper thighs. Do not wipe your genital area.
- Allow your skin to air dry. Dress in clean bedclothes.



## Shower #2: Morning of Surgery

- Shower again with regular soap. Do **not** shave any area of your body that is near the surgical site. Dry off with a clean towel.
- Then, use the 2nd CHG cloth to wipe the **front of your body**, the same as you did last night.
- Allow your skin to air dry. Do **not** apply hair products, deodorants, lotions, or fragrances.
- Dress in clean clothes and come to the hospital as planned.

# Eating Before

- You may eat and drink as usual **until 8 hours before your C-section.**
- **8 hours before your C-section,** drink 8 ounces of apple juice.
- Keep drinking **clear liquids** until 2 hours before your C-section.
- **2 hours before your C-section,** drink 8 ounces of apple juice.
- **Starting 2 hours before your C-section,** do not take anything by mouth.



# Stopping Medicines



Ask your doctor to review all the medicines you are taking. You may need to stop taking some of them for a few days or longer before your C-section.

# When to Arrive

Ask your doctor what time your surgery is scheduled.

Plan to arrive at Labor and Delivery **2 hours before that time**, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.



# Your Support Person

Your support person:

- May be with you in your Labor and Delivery room



- Will wait in your Labor and Delivery room until we call them to come to the operating room (OR)
- Will sit near your head during the surgery
- Can help hold your baby in the OR after delivery

# Labor and Delivery

In Labor and Delivery, you will:

- Sign consent forms for surgery, if not already done
- Meet with the anesthesia team
- Meet with the delivery team

A nurse will:

- Place an *intravenous* (IV) line in your arm
- Draw blood so we can check your blood sugar
- Clip your pubic hair
- Start a fetal heart rate monitor so we can check your baby's heart rate





# Before Surgery

In the OR:

- You will drink an antacid drink.
- The anesthesia team will give you spinal anesthesia or place an epidural.
- You will start to feel numb from your breasts to your toes.
- A nurse will:
  - Place wraps (SCDs) on your legs to prevent blood clots
  - Wash your abdomen
  - Place a Foley catheter in your bladder to drain urine



# In the Operating Room



- You will be in the OR for about 60 to 90 minutes. Most times, the baby is delivered within the first 10 minutes.
- After delivery:
  - The pediatric team will check your baby's health.
  - If it is safe, we will bring your baby to you for skin-to-skin holding and help you start breastfeeding.
  - If extra care is needed, we will take your baby to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

# Right After Surgery

After the surgery:

- You will return to your Labor and Delivery room to rest.
- Nurses will take your vital signs often.
- Feeling in your legs will start to return as the anesthesia wears off.
- You can begin to eat and drink.
- If needed, we will place a wound vac. Your doctor will talk with you about this if it is needed.



# Recovery in Postpartum



- We encourage you to walk often, with help. Walking will help you heal. Plan to walk in the halls several times a day.
- Your appetite may be lower after surgery. You may need to eat smaller meals at first.
- We will help you work on breastfeeding. Ask for lactation services staff to visit, if needed.
- We will remove your Foley catheter.

# Pain Control

Most times, medicine you receive during surgery will help control pain for 12 to 18 hours after surgery.

As needed, you will also receive:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (Advil) or ketorolac
- Opioid pain medicine (Oxycodone or Hydromorphone)

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen will be your main pain medicines. Opioids will be given only if needed.



# Other Medicines

You may also receive these other medicines while you are in the hospital:

- Bowel medicines (constipation is common, especially if you take opioids)
- Anti-nausea medicines
- Anti-heartburn medicines
- RhoGAM (if needed)
- Birth control (if desired)



# Going Home



Most women go home 2 days after their C-section. Before you leave the hospital, we want to make sure you can:

- **Walk** without help
- **Eat** without nausea or vomiting
- **Urinate** (pee) as usual
- **Control your pain** with only pain pills

# Discharge Medicines

When you leave the hospital, you will keep taking these medicines at home:

- Pain medicines:
  - Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
  - Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)
  - Opioids, if needed
- Bowel medicines (to prevent constipation)
- Birth control (if desired)





# Pain Control at Home

- Take your pain medicines as prescribed.
- If you are taking opioids:
  - Do **not** drive while you are taking opioids.
  - Taper (decrease) your dose over the first week you are home. To do this, first start taking a lower dose. Then allow more time between doses until you are no longer taking any opioids.



# Self-care at Home

- Take walks. Walking will help your body heal.
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.
- You may shower. Let the water run gently over your incision. Do **not** scrub your incision.
- You will have white tape (called Steri-strips) over your incision. If they do not fall off on their own, please remove them after 1 week.



# Activity Restrictions



## For 6 weeks after your C-section:

- Limit your household chores. Do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds.) Ask for help as needed.
- Do **not** use tampons, have sex, or put anything else in your vagina.

# Warning Signs

## Call us if you have any of these problems:

- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- Chills
- Nausea or vomiting, or both
- Redness, warmth, or drainage at your incision
- Severe pain
- Heavy bleeding from your vagina
- Constipation that lasts more than 3 days

