



## **Delivery by Caesarean Section Post Care Information**

### **Caring for your Caesarean wound**

Wound care is an important part of your recovery after a caesarean section.

- Usually there will be a surgical dressing covering your wound for about 2 weeks after your surgery. You can shower with this dressing on.
- The dressing is then removed with the wound usually left uncovered - it just needs to be kept clean and dry. Please remove the dressing earlier if not intact.
- Showering daily is important. It is quite safe to get the wound wet and to use soap over the wound as long as you wash it off completely and pat it dry with a towel or tissue afterwards.
- Some women will need to lift their tummy up a bit to make sure the wound dries well – this reduces the chance of infection. You may ask the staff for some absorbent padding if the skin fold is staying damp.
- Do not apply creams or powders directly onto the wound unless advised to do so by the doctor or midwife.
- We recommend you wear loose clothing and cotton underwear which comfortably stretches over the wound.

### **The colour and appearance of the wound:**

- Bruising of the wound occurs in almost all cases - even in uncomplicated cases, sometimes there can be quite a lot of bruising.
- It is also normal to have some mild swelling, redness and tenderness along the cut – part of this is due to the stitch 'dissolving'.
- Infection is uncommon but can occur in about 5% of women. Things that might suggest infection (and things you should see a doctor about) include:
  - extreme soreness after the initial pain has settled
  - an area of new redness, heat and tenderness developing around or near the wound, after the first couple of days
  - discharge or oozing, generally with a bad smell (a little bit of old blood coming out mostly isn't an infection)
  - having a high temperature
  - the wound opening up quite a lot
- About 3 - 4 weeks after surgery, some women will experience new wound pain as the nerves that were cut begin to work again. This pain lasts about a week or so and then settles.
- Your wound will be reasonably well healed by 6 weeks. It will remain red for a few months but over time, usually it will fade to become a white or silvery line.

**Food, rest and exercise after your Caesarean** These days it is common to resume eating quite soon after a caesarean, as it is good for your recovery.

- As long as you are not feeling sick, you should try to drink 2 litres of water every day. This is good for your kidneys and also helps prevent constipation.
- Both rest and exercise are important for good recovery.
- In the early weeks, your baby will generally be awake at night requiring feeding and settling. So make sure you get as much rest during the daytime as you can.
- Holding and caring for your baby does not harm the healing process and helps you get to know your baby.
- Early activity is also important for recovery, helping you to avoid complications and reducing your pain.
  - Gentle walking, building up the distance over the weeks, is a great way to start
  - Build up activity as you feel stronger and more comfortable
  - Most people can do all the activities they did before pregnancy by 6–8 weeks after surgery
  - It's best to avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks
  - Do not drive until you are free from pain with any sudden movement

### **Your bowels after surgery**

It is normal for the bowel to slow down and take a few days to return to its normal state after an operation like a caesarean. Some women have 'wind pains' as it gets back to normal. In addition, some women have trouble with constipation (hard bowel motion or stool). This can often be prevented by:

- Drinking 2 litres of water every day
- Eating lots of vegetables, fruit and high fibre foods
- Moving around and being active as much as possible
- Avoiding painkillers containing oxycodone or codeine, if possible

Sometimes we may also give you some medication to make the bowel motion soft. This often comes in the form of a drink. It is completely safe for you and your breastfed baby.

### **Your bladder after surgery**

Sometimes an infection in the bladder can occur. The main symptoms are burning and stinging on passing urine and passing small amounts frequently. If you have any symptoms like this, talk to your GP or contact me.

In addition, in the first month or so you may have some 'normal' low tummy discomfort as the bladder fills up. This is because the bladder sits directly on top of the place deep inside where the uterus was cut during the birth of your baby. As the bladder fills up, it presses on this cut. This discomfort generally goes back to normal after 6 weeks.