

Birth After Caesarean



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Every picture tells a story.

Thank you to all the women who so generously provided their photos for use in this publication.

Produced by:

Women and Newborn Health Service

Email: kemh.hl@health.wa.gov.au

Website: www.wnhs.health.wa.gov.au

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WOMEN AND NEWBORN HEALTH SERVICE

King Edward Memorial Hospital

374 Bagot Road Subiaco WA 6008

Telephone: (08) 9340 2222



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

Vaginal Birth After Caesarean (VBAC)

Most women who have had a previous Lower Uterine Segment Caesarean Section (LUSCS) are eligible for a vaginal birth after Caesarean (commonly referred to as VBAC). Research suggests that when women are well supported the success rates are high and there are many benefits of VBAC.

How you decide to give birth is a personal choice. In some cases a repeat Caesarean will be recommended for certain medical or obstetric reasons. It is important that you have an opportunity to discuss all of your options with your health care team.

Benefits of vaginal birth

- Less blood loss.
- No complications associated with surgery.
- Reduced chance of infection.
- Quicker recovery time.
- Fewer complications for future pregnancies such as, the placenta growing into the scar on the uterus which can lead to severe bleeding.
- Less risk of the baby having breathing problems that require admission to neonatal intensive care.

Risks of VBAC

As with any pregnancy there are always some risks involved. The most serious risk for women attempting a VBAC is that the uterus might tear along the scar, however this is known to occur in less than one percent of cases (it is important to understand that this could also happen even if a repeat Caesarean is planned). If a tear does occur there may be some internal bleeding. Depending on the degree of bleeding some women may require a blood transfusion and/or hysterectomy. In very rare circumstances the baby may be harmed or die.

To lessen the risk of a tear, spontaneous labour is preferred to induced labour for VBAC.



Repeat Caesarean

Although most women who have had a previous LUSCS are eligible for a VBAC, some will need to have another Caesarean for reasons related to the health and wellbeing of the mother or baby. Some women choose to have a repeat Caesarean for personal reasons.

Benefits of Caesarean

- For women and babies whose medical condition means vaginal birth would be dangerous or not possible, a Caesarean provides a safer alternative in comparison.
- For women who are so highly fearful of childbirth that their mental health is affected by it, planning to give birth by Caesarean may reduce their anxiety.



Risks of Caesarean

We now know that Caesareans are not as trouble-free as was once thought. For some women and babies however, the risks of a Caesarean are far less than the risk of vaginal birth.

- Increased likelihood of blood loss.
Depending on the degree of bleeding, some women may require a blood transfusion and/or hysterectomy (although this is very rare).
- Risk of developing complications associated with having surgery, such as blood clots, scalpel cuts to the bladder or bowel.
- Chance of wound infection.
- Slower recovery time.
- Increased likelihood of complications for future pregnancies, for example the placenta growing into the scar on the uterus which can lead to severe bleeding.
- Risk of the baby having breathing problems and requiring admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
- Increased likelihood of the baby having feeding problems.
- Risk of scalpel cuts to the baby.

YOUR MIDWIFE OR DOCTOR WILL BE HAPPY TO TALK THROUGH YOUR OPTIONS AND CHOICES AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

Resources

Please feel free to ask for a Next Birth After Caesarean (NBAC) information package.

Next Birth After Caesarean (NBAC) Clinic (KEMH)

Tel: (08) 9340 1626

Birthrites: Healing After Caesarean Inc.

www.birthrites.org

The Bump WA – Centre for Pregnancy, Childbirth Education and Early Parenting Services

Located in Fremantle, Kalamunda and Joondalup

www.thebumpwa.org.au

Tel: (08) 9430 6882

Your Child Health Nurse

Women and Newborn Health Library, KEMH

Tel: (08) 9340 1100

Postnatal Depression Support

- From the Heart WA
www.fromtheheartwa.org.au

- Post and Antenatal Depression Association (PANDA) helpline 1300 726 306
- Pregnancy, Birth and Baby helpline 1800 882 436 (24 hours/7days)

Additional information can also be accessed from the following websites:

www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/health/VBAC/index.htm

www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/services/NBAC/index.htm

www.childbirthconnection.org

www.vbac.com

