

# Cesarean Section vs Vaginal Delivery

BELOW IS A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE DELIVERY METHODS, FOCUSING ON WHY EACH OPTION MAY BE INDICATED AND HOW RECOVERY MAY VARY.

## Cesarean Section

A C-Section is a surgical procedure where the baby is delivered through incisions in the mother's abdomen and uterus. The mother is typically awake during the procedure, although a spinal block is placed to block sensation during surgery. This typically takes 45 minutes to 1 hour.

### INDICATIONS

- An unplanned or emergency C-section may occur if labor fails to progress or if baby appears to be in distress.
  - If this happens, your provider will discuss next steps and associated risks and benefits so you can decide how to progress together.
- You might plan a C-section if you are carrying multiple babies, if the baby/babies are in an unusual position, or if there is a problem with the placenta.
  - Other reasons your provider may recommend a c-section include if you have a history of heart or brain problems or if you have a history of prior uterine surgeries.

### RECOVERY

- Postpartum recovery can take up to 6-8 weeks and usually involves a 3-4 day hospital stay.
- There may be pain, soreness and tenderness along the incision. There also may be temporary digestive problems and nausea.

Symptoms common to both include:  
light vaginal bleeding, discharge, enlarged or sore breasts, and tiredness.

## Vaginal Delivery

Vaginal delivery is when the baby is delivered through the birth canal. Labor can take place in a variety of settings and mothers have options for either a medicated or unmedicated course. Timing of labor may be unpredictable and can last anywhere from a few hours to a couple days.

### INDICATIONS

- This is the preferred form of delivery for most people as it poses less risk and tends to be easier on the body compared to a c-section.
  - Multiple c-sections also increases risk of complications in future pregnancies, so your provider may recommend vaginal delivery if you plan to have multiple children.
- It can be a more unique and personalized experience for the family, with options to deliver at home, in the hospital, in the bath and more.
  - There are medications that are commonly used to progress labor or help minimize pain, but women may choose an unmedicated birth as well.

### RECOVERY

- Postpartum recovery can take up to 4-6 weeks and usually involves a 1-3 day hospital stay.
- If the vagina is torn during delivery, stitches may be placed to facilitate healing. These stitches usually dissolve after 2 weeks.

## Vaginal Delivery after C Section

- Vaginal birth after a C-section (VBAC) is possible for many women but requires a conversation with your OB/Gyn about your individual circumstances and risk factors. It's important to discuss the type of incision made during the previous c-section, other previous abdominal surgeries, and other health conditions that may affect your pregnancy.
- A rare risk associated with VBAC is uterine rupture, which is a life threatening emergency for both mother and baby. This is one of the key risks your provider will consider when deciding if a VBAC is a good option for you.

PLANNING YOUR DELIVERY IS AN IMPORTANT PART IN PREPARING TO WELCOME YOUR BABY INTO THE WORLD, BE SURE TO DISCUSS WHAT OPTION MAKES THE MOST SENSE FOR YOU WITH YOUR PROVIDER.

#### SOURCES:

- [HTTPS://WWW.MAYOCLINIC.ORG/TESTS-PROCEDURES/C-SECTION/ABOUT/PAC-20393655](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/c-section/about/pac-20393655)
- [HTTPS://WWW.THEMOTHERBABYCENTER.ORG/BLOG/2023/04/C-SECTION-VS-VAGINAL-BIRTH/#:~:TEXT=IN%20A%20CESAREAN%20DELIVERY%2C%20THE,RECOVERY%20TIME%2C%20AND%20PAIN%20LEVEL.](https://www.themotherbabycenter.org/blog/2023/04/c-section-vs-vaginal-birth/#:~:text=IN%20A%20CESAREAN%20DELIVERY%2C%20THE,RECOVERY%20TIME%2C%20AND%20PAIN%20LEVEL.)

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