

YOUR VALUES  
YOUR PREFERENCES  
YOUR CHOICE

Allina Health 

# Considering Your Childbirth Options After a Cesarean

*Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC) or Planned Cesarean Birth*



# Planning for Childbirth After a Cesarean Birth

If you have already had a Cesarean birth, you have two choices about how to give birth again:

- vaginal birth after Cesarean (VBAC)
- planned Cesarean delivery.

## VBAC

A VBAC is when you have a vaginal birth after you have already had a Cesarean birth. This decision will be one that you and your health care provider will make together.

Among women delivering babies in Allina Health hospitals, 4 out of 5 have successfully had a VBAC.

## Guidelines for VBAC

These are the guidelines for being able to have a VBAC, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG):

- you have had 1 or 2 previous Cesareans
- you have not had previous uterine surgery
- your previous uterine scar has not ruptured
- the size of your pelvis is wide enough to attempt a vaginal birth and you have not had any pelvic problems
- you have no other restrictions.

You should give birth in a hospital setting so the surgeon, nurses and an anesthesiologist are immediately available in case an emergency Cesarean birth is needed.

## Pain control

You have options to control pain during vaginal birth. The most common option is a labor epidural.

Your health care provider will insert a small catheter (thin plastic tube) into your lower back. The tip of the catheter rests in the area just outside the spinal cord. This area is called the epidural space. Medicines to control labor pain are given through the catheter.

Your health care provider will explain the benefits and risks of a labor epidural. They can explain other pain control options that are available.

## Your feelings

You may have mixed or negative feelings about giving birth vaginally.

You may be afraid to attempt labor, not knowing what to expect. You may favor a Cesarean birth because you know what to expect. If your last birth started with labor and ended with a Cesarean birth, you may not want to go through labor again.

Remember, each pregnancy and labor is different. In deciding if a VBAC is right for you, your health care provider will take your specific health into account.

# Planning for Childbirth After a Cesarean Birth (continued)

## Planned Cesarean Birth

You may have a planned Cesarean birth. This means you and your health care provider know before your labor begins this is the way your baby will be born.

A Cesarean birth might be planned if:

- you are at least 39 weeks into your pregnancy
- you have had a Cesarean birth
- you have had complications in a previous birth
- your baby is breech (your baby's buttocks, feet or both are closest to the cervix)
- you have placenta previa (the placenta is covering some or all of the cervix)
- you have other risk factors that prevent you from giving birth vaginally.

In a Cesarean birth, your baby is born through an incision (surgical cut) in your lower abdomen. The surgery takes about 1 hour. Your baby is born within minutes after the surgery begins. The rest of the time is needed to remove the placenta and repair the incisions.

## Recovery

You can expect to be in a recovery area for about 90 minutes after delivery. If you and your baby are doing well, your baby will stay with you. Only your support person and baby can be in the room with you.

Make plans for your support person to stay with you for 24 to 48 hours after your surgery to help care for your baby.

Other members of your care circle (family members, friends or others close to you) are welcome to visit you and your baby after you are transferred to your room.

Most families want to stay together after the birth. Your baby will stay with you at all times unless you or your baby needs special care or testing, or you want your baby to visit the nursery.

Your health care team will offer education and support as you and your partner learn to care for your baby.

# Comparing Your Options

	VBAC	Planned Cesarean Birth
<b>Childbirth</b> — <i>When will I be able to deliver my baby?</i> — <i>How long will the delivery take?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You will give birth through the process of labor.</li> <li>■ You may not be able to be induced until 41 weeks into your pregnancy.</li> <li>■ The length of time for labor varies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You will know the exact date and time of your delivery.</li> <li>■ You will not need to go through labor.</li> <li>■ The surgery takes about 1 hour.</li> </ul>
— What is most important to you?		
<b>Hospital Stay</b> — <i>How long will I stay in the hospital?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Together, you, your health care provider and your baby's health care provider will make a decision together about when you and your baby are ready to leave the hospital.</li> <li>■ Your hospital stay may be as brief as 24 hours or as long as 36 hours after delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Together, you, your health care provider and your baby's health care provider will make a decision together about when you and your baby are ready to leave the hospital.</li> <li>■ Your hospital stay may be as brief as 24 hours or as long as 72 hours after delivery.</li> </ul>
— What is most important to you?		
<b>Recovery</b> — <i>How long will it take for me to return to my regular activities?</i>	Recovery from vaginal birth may take up to 4 to 6 weeks.	Recovery from Cesarean births may take up to 6 to 8 weeks.
— What is most important to you?		

# Comparing Your Options (continued)

	VBAC	Planned Cesarean Birth
<p><b>Surgical risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Are there any general risks after delivery?</i></li> <li>— <i>Are there any side effects for me or my baby after delivery?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There is an increased risk of uterine rupture, which is a tear or opening in the uterus. This happens in fewer than 1 out of 100 VBACs.</li> <li>■ There is no guarantee a VBAC will work, which can result in a Cesarean birth.</li> <li>■ Side effects to you may include bleeding and infection.</li> <li>■ Side effects to your baby may include infection, birth trauma or brain injury.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You may have damage to the bladder, bowel or ureters (tubes that bring urine from the kidney to the bladder).</li> <li>■ You will have a scar on your belly from the surgery.</li> <li>■ Side effects to you may include bleeding, wound infection and possible reaction to anesthesia.</li> <li>■ Side effects to your baby may include infection, birth trauma or brain injury.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— What is most important to you?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Future pregnancy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Will I be able to have a vaginal birth in the future?</i></li> </ul>	<p>You will have a better chance of vaginal birth in future pregnancies.</p>	<p>You will have a lower chance of having a vaginal birth in future pregnancies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— What is most important to you?</li> </ul>		

# My Preferences

Questions	My Thoughts
As you think about both options, what are your fears or concerns?	
Are you willing to get extra help for a while if it makes you more likely to recover safely?	
As you think about your options, what are your hopes or goals?	
What matters to you most?	
Which of these options, at this time, do you feel fits best with your birth plan?	
Is there anything that may get in the way of you having a VBAC or a Cesarean birth?	

## My Decision at This Time

VBAC     planned Cesarean birth     undecided



# Next Steps (continued)

## Insurance Coverage

Health care benefits change and differ from plan to plan and provider to provider. It is important for you to understand your health care benefits before your delivery.

Please call your insurance provider and find out exactly what is and isn't covered under your plan, and how much you have to pay yourself. Look for the telephone number on your membership card.

Check with your insurance provider if you have any questions about your coverage.

## Notes

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# Resources

- Allina Health.org  
[allinahealth.org/pregnancy](http://allinahealth.org/pregnancy)
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
[acog.org](http://acog.org)

# Allina Health Account

Sign up for an Allina Health account online to get:

- better communication with your clinic, hospital and provider
- faster answers
- online access to you and your loved one's health information anytime.

With your account, you can:

- read visit notes and follow-up instructions
- view and pay bills
- refill a prescription
- view immunizations and medicines
- set and track health goals
- receive lab results sooner
- do an online visit for common conditions
- manage another person's care
- write a health care directive
- email your care team\*
- schedule appointments\*.

Sign up for a secure account online at [allinahealth.org](http://allinahealth.org). Your account is a free service of Allina Health.

*\*Availability varies by location. Ask your clinic or hospital if this service is available.*

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