

C-SECTION RECOVERY

Following a Cesarean section, most mothers and babies stay in the hospital for two to three days. Pain medication is administered through an intravenous tube or orally after the anesthesia wears off. Oral pain relievers are usually sufficient after you have left the hospital. If you find that you are still in significant pain, please contact your care provider to discuss pain control. It's not unusual to have muscle soreness for quite some time after the surgery. Soon after your surgery, the hospital staff will encourage you to walk with their assistance. Standing and moving around will help to speed up your recovery and prevent potential complications. While you are at the hospital the staff will monitor your incision for signs of infection. They will also monitor how much you are eating, drinking and how your bladder and bowel are working.



How long will it take to recover?

Normally it takes from four to six weeks for a C-section incision to heal completely. Many women find it takes time to feel "back to normal". Take it slow and don't rush yourself. Give yourself time to rest. Your body needs adequate time to heal properly. Remember that you are recovering from a major surgery and dealing with the challenges of a new baby. Try to focus on taking physical care of yourself and mothering your baby.

Can I still breastfeed?

With help, you'll be able to start breastfeeding soon after the C-section. Discomfort near your incision can make breast-feeding somewhat uncomfortable. Ask your nurse or the hospital's lactation consultant to help you position yourself so that you're comfortable. Even if you are breastfeeding, you can take your pain medications. The actual amount of medications that will reach your breast milk and your baby are minimal.



If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

TIPS FOR RECOVERY

A C-section is a major surgery, and like any other major operation, the recovery period can be difficult and will take some time. While you're recovering:

- Keep everything that you and your baby might need within reach. Until your six-week checkup, don't lift anything heavier than your baby.
- Support your abdomen. Use a soft pillow as a splint and hug your abdomen near the incision during sudden movements, like coughing, sneezing or laughing.
- Eat nutritious foods and be sure to eat plenty of high-fiber items to help prevent constipation.
- Drink up. Extra fluids can help replace those lost during delivery and breastfeeding, as well as prevent constipation. Remember to empty your bladder frequently to reduce the risk of urinary tract infections.
- Allow family or friends to help you with chores and caring for the baby.
- Take medication as needed. Your doctor may recommend acetaminophen to relieve pain.
- Avoid sex. Most care providers recommend waiting six weeks before resuming intercourse.
- Don't drive. Until you can handle the sudden movements driving might require, let someone else drive. Before you drive anywhere with the baby on your own, make sure you can comfortably manage the baby's car seat or infant carrier.
- Monitor and keep your incision clean to prevent infection. Know when to contact your care provider. Be sure to report any signs of infection — such as severe pain in your abdomen; redness, swelling and discharge at your incision site.

Depending on the circumstances of your c-section, you may have conflicting emotions. Talk to others you trust about how you feel. Other moms who have had c-sections are often good resources. Additional resources may include your doctor, midwife, or community support groups like the International Cesarean Awareness Network (ICAN). Visit www.ican-online.com to find a group in your area.



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