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or drink anything
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before surgery.*

Cesarean Birth (C-Section)

This information will help you prepare for your Cesarean birth (C-Section). It will help you to understand what you can expect before, during and after your surgery as well as important care guidelines you should follow after you leave the hospital.

Preparing for Your Cesarean Birth

Pre-register by the 20th week of pregnancy.

It is recommended to pre-register by the 20th week of pregnancy, or as soon as possible. You may choose to pre-register by choosing 1 of 3 options:

- Via the Internet at: www.nm.org/laboranddelivery.
- By completing a packet in your doctor's office.
- In person at the Admitting Department, 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital, 312.472.3599.

You will need your medical insurance information to pre-register.

Three days before surgery

- If you are diabetic, you will need specific instructions about the use of oral medicines and insulin. Check with your doctor to see if you should take insulin prior to and on the day of your surgery.
- Make sure you have completed any lab tests, if ordered by your doctor.

One day before surgery

- A Labor and Delivery (L&D) staff member may call to confirm your arrival time and answer any questions. If you are having surgery on Monday, you will receive a call the Friday before surgery. Most often, hospital check-in is 2 hours before your scheduled C-Section.

The Day of Surgery

Do not eat or drink anything for 8 hours before your scheduled surgery time. This includes:

- Gum
- Hard candy
- Water

If you eat or drink during this time, your surgery time will be delayed.

As instructed by your doctor, you may take any needed medicines with sips of water, just enough to swallow the pills.

What to Bring to the Hospital

- A list of allergies
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter, and herbals)
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicaid card (Medicaid patients only)
- Containers for contact lenses, glasses, or dentures
- Toiletries and other personal items
- Copy of Advance Directive/Durable Power of Attorney forms

Please leave all valuables (jewelry, credit cards, money) at home. This also includes body-piercing jewelry and tongue studs which cannot be worn during surgery.

Keep in mind that make-up, nail polish, hairpins, false eyelashes, hearing aids, dentures, hairpieces and jewelry, cannot be worn during surgery. You may wear contact lenses or glasses.

We suggest that you limit the items you bring to L&D. This will decrease the need to transport items when you move to the Postpartum Unit. You may want to ask your family or friends to bring any other belongings to the post-partum room, following your transfer.

Your partner may bring a camera. But keep in mind, no pictures may be taken during the actual birth.

Parking

Labor and Delivery Triage is located on the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital, 250 East Superior Street at Fairbanks. Valet parking is available at Prentice. The parking garage is located at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discount parking rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Take the valet parking ticket to the Information Desk (1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital) for validation.

Arrival

Two hours before your scheduled C-Section, come to the L&D Triage Unit on the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital to check in. You will then go to the Labor and Delivery Unit on the 8th floor where you will wait to be called in for pre-op.

You will be asked to change in to a hospital gown and give a urine sample. The nurse will review your health history and take your blood pressure, temperature and, pulse. A fetal monitor is used to listen to the baby's heart rate. An IV (into the vein) line is placed in your arm or hand.

Doctor Visits

An anesthesiologist will visit you to:

- Review your medical history.
- Discuss the type of pain-relief medicine (anesthesia) to be used in surgery.
- Answer any questions you have.

Many women choose to receive spinal or epidural anesthesia which allows you to be awake for the birth of your baby. With these types of **anesthesia**, numbing medicine is injected into the mid or lower back. The nerves going into the incision site and nearby areas are numbed. With a spinal or epidural, you may have a lack of feeling from the waist to the toes. Feeling returns in a few hours.

Your doctor or the resident doctor will also visit to explain the C-Section and answer any questions. You are asked to sign consent forms for both anesthesia and the surgery.

Just before entering the OR for your surgery, jewelry, hearing aids, dentures and hairpieces are removed. If you are having a spinal or epidural anesthesia, one person can be with you during your surgery. Your partner or support person will change into a disposable jumpsuit to fit over his/her clothes, shoe covers, a surgical hat and a mask to wear in the OR. After anesthesia is given, your partner can join you in the OR and may bring a camera.

During Surgery

Once in the OR, you are assisted onto a firm table. After a numbing medicine is injected, you may feel pressure and touch but no pain. You are re-positioned for your surgery. A tube (catheter) is inserted into your bladder to drain your urine. Then your lower abdomen is cleansed and you are covered with sterile sheets.

At this time your partner is escorted to the OR and positioned at the head of your bed. Once the anesthesia has taken effect, the doctor makes an incision into your abdomen. Then an incision is made into the uterus to deliver the baby.

The baby is placed on a special bed. Matching ID (identification) bands are placed on you, your baby and your partner. Your partner can come over to see the baby. **Photos may be taken at this time.**

After Surgery

Your Cesarean birth takes about 1 hour. You and your baby are then taken to the Recovery Room. Your support person or partner may be with you during this time.

There you and your baby are cared for and closely monitored. The nurse checks you to:

- Assure your comfort.
- Help control any pain you may have.

While in the OR or Recovery Room, your baby may be placed on your chest (skin-to-skin contact). This helps to:

- Keep your baby warm.
- Promote mother/infant bonding.
- Foster breastfeeding.

At this time, you will also have a chance to begin feeding your baby. Your nurse can assist you as needed.

It is strongly encouraged that visitors are limited to just the partner/support person at this time to allow mother/baby bonding and recovery. No children are permitted here. Other visitors who wish to see you and the baby are encouraged to wait until you are transferred to your postpartum room and visit during postpartum visiting hours (see below).

After about 2 hours, you are then escorted to your postpartum room.

Postpartum Care

Once in your room, the nurse will take your blood pressure, pulse and temperature and check your vaginal bleeding. As needed, medicine is given for pain or discomfort. Remember that good pain relief is an important to your recovery.

Your diet may begin with clear liquids and progress to a regular diet.

Most patients are out of bed on the same day as surgery. Your nurse will assist you with getting out of bed and walking. Do not try this alone the first time. Deep breathing, coughing, turning, and walking in the hall help:

- Speed your recovery
- Improve circulation
- Promote healing
- Prevent complications

The urine catheter, inserted before surgery, remains in place until the next morning. The IV may be in place for 1 or 2 days. If you have staples, your doctor will most likely remove these before you leave the hospital.

Your obstetrician oversees your care while the pediatrician you have selected directs the care of your baby. If you choose, your obstetrician can perform your baby's circumcision during your hospital stay.

During your stay on the Postpartum Unit, family members may visit between the hours of **9 am and 8:30 pm**. One adult support person may stay overnight. Siblings of any age may visit, however, any other children, such as nieces and nephews, must be over the age of 12. Children may not stay overnight or past visiting hours.

Please carefully review the *Mother and New Baby Care* booklet found in your room. Write down any questions for your doctor or nurse.

Both your baby's doctor and your doctor will see you before you are discharged. The discharge time is around 11 am.

Your doctor and nurse will review care guidelines for you and your new baby.

At Home

Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions and the guidelines found below to help you recover from your C-Section:

- Make sure you rest as much as possible.
- Try to nap when the baby naps.
- Do not lift anything heavier than your baby.
- Slowly increase your activity.
- Continue to take pain medicine as needed.

Driving/Exercise

Do not exercise or drive without checking with your doctor or midwife. Do not drive after taking narcotic pain medicine.

Diet

You may resume your normal diet. Taking extra fluids helps prevent constipation. If you are breastfeeding (or providing breast milk for your baby), do not drink any alcohol. If you are taking narcotic pain medicine, do not drink any alcohol.

Bathing

You may shower or bathe as long as your incision edges are not open. Use a mild soap to gently clean your incision and carefully pat it dry.

Incision

You may note discomfort from the incision and muscle aches. Getting up and moving about can ease some of the discomfort. Brace your incision with a pillow when coughing or sneezing. Keep your incision clean and dry. Wear cotton panties, but there is no need to cover the incision site. You may have small Steri-Strips™ (little pieces of white tape) on your incision. Do not remove these strips. These offer extra support while your incision heals. They will slowly curl up and fall off on their own about 1 week after surgery. If they have not fallen off 1 week after your surgery, then you may gently remove them.

Sexual Activity and Birth Control

Check with your doctor before resuming sexual activity. Often, after 4 to 6 weeks, if you feel good and are well rested, sexual activity may be resumed. Avoid positions that strain the incision site.

Keep in mind that breastfeeding is not a form of birth control. Please talk with your doctor about birth control options.

When to Call Your Doctor

Inspect your incision daily for signs of infection. Contact your doctor if you note any of the following symptoms:

- Oral temperature over 100.4° F.
- Drainage or fluid from the incision that may be foul-smelling.
- Increased tenderness or soreness at the wound.
- Wound edges that are no longer together.
- Redness or swelling at the wound site.

Doctor's Appointments

Follow-up doctor's visits are important after you leave the hospital. Most C-Section patients will have their first appointment in 6 weeks. Before your discharge, you will receive more information about your follow-up visits. If you have any questions please call your doctor.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Labor and Delivery Unit