

Cesarean Delivery: Enhanced Recovery Pathway

This brochure will give you and your family an overview of what will happen and what you need to do before your cesarean (C-section) delivery. It will also tell you what to expect in the hospital. Your obstetrician will talk with you more about your specific surgery.

Your healthcare team will follow the enhanced recovery pathway practices that have been studied and proven to help you recover safely and quickly. You are the most important member of this team. As your partners in this program, we will teach you how to take an active role in your recovery.

Before your C-section delivery

If you take blood-thinning (anticoagulant) medication, please ask your obstetrician when you should stop taking this medication before your surgery. Make a post-delivery follow-up appointment with your obstetrician as directed.

If you have any questions, ask your obstetrician or nurse.

1 day before your C-section delivery

Pre-operative phone call

The day before your C-section, you will receive a call to remind you of the steps you need to take. If you do not receive this call, please call the hospital to confirm your arrival time for the next day.

Pre-operative diet

We recommend eating more carbohydrates for 1 to 2 days before your C-section. This will help your body have the energy you need for surgery.

and recovery. Foods that are good sources of carbohydrates include:

- › Pasta
- › Beans and lentils
- › Rice
- › Milk
- › Cereals
- › Fruit
- › Bread

If you have diabetes, please talk with your obstetrician about your diet.

At bedtime on the night before your C-section

- › Drink 20 ounces of Gatorade®, Ensure Pre-Surgery, BODYARMOR Sports Drink® or an electrolyte sports drink. If you have diabetes, drink a low-sugar electrolyte/sports drink such as G2® Lower Sugar Gatorade or BODYARMOR Zero Sugar Sports Drink®.
- › Stop eating solid foods 6 hours before your scheduled hospital arrival time.

Preparing your skin for surgery

You can help prevent an infection after a C-section by making sure your skin is clean. Reduce the number of germs on your skin by carefully washing according to these guidelines:


- › Shower or bathe with soap the night before your C-section.
- › If you have time, shower again on the day of your delivery.
- › Do not shave or wax your abdomen and pelvic area, including pubic hair, before surgery. Shaving and waxing can create tiny cuts that increase the risk of infection.

Special instructions for chlorhexidine gluconate soap

Your obstetrician may ask you to shower or bathe with a special soap called chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) soap. **Only use this soap if your obstetrician tells you to do so.**

Hibiclens® is a common brand of this soap, but you may use any brand of CHG soap. The soap may come in a liquid form or in a scrub brush applicator. Either form is OK to use. Do not use this soap if you are allergic to CHG.

Please follow these instructions to make sure your skin is clean. Shower or bathe with CHG soap the night before your C-section. If you also shower the day of your delivery and your obstetrician recommended CHG



soap, please use it at this time as well. Follow these steps to wash with CHG soap (if recommended):

1. With each shower or bath, wash your hair with your normal shampoo.
2. Rinse your hair and body well after you shampoo your hair. This helps remove the shampoo residue.
3. Apply the CHG soap to your entire body **only from the neck down. Do not use CHG soap near your eyes or ears to avoid permanent injury to those areas.** Wash well, paying special attention to your abdomen, including your belly button.
4. If showering, turn the water off so you do not rinse the soap off too soon. Wash your body gently for **5 minutes**. Do not scrub your skin too hard. Do not wash with your regular soap after using the CHG soap.
5. Rinse your body well with water.
6. Pat yourself dry with a clean, soft towel.

The day of your C-section delivery

Diet and medication

You may eat solid food **up to 6 hours** before your scheduled hospital arrival time. You may drink clear liquids **up to 2 hours** before your scheduled arrival time. Clear liquids include water, broth, apple juice, and coffee or tea without milk or creamer.


2 hours before your hospital arrival time

- › Drink 8 ounces (1 cup) of Gatorade, Ensure Pre-Surgery, BODYARMOR Sports Drink or an electrolyte sports drink. If you have diabetes, drink a low-sugar electrolyte sports drink such as G2 Lower Sugar Gatorade or BODYARMOR Zero Sugar Sports Drink.
- › Take your usual daily medications as directed by your obstetrician. Take them with the sports drink.
- › After this time, do not eat or drink anything.

Getting ready for your C-section delivery

Before coming to the hospital, remember to:

- › Shower or bathe if you have time. If your healthcare team asked you to use CHG soap, please use it.
- › Do not shave or wax your abdomen and pelvic area, including pubic hair, before surgery.

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- › Remove all jewelry, including body piercings. Leave all jewelry at home.
 - › Wear loose and comfortable clothing.
 - › Bring 2 packages of your favorite sugarless gum to the hospital.

After you arrive at the hospital

Please arrive on time. We will make every effort to ensure your C-section starts at the scheduled time. However, it may be delayed due to a hospital emergency or other surgeries that take longer than expected.

Pre-operative area


A nurse will take you to the pre-operative area. They will complete a final checklist with you. When you are settled in the pre-operative area, we will:

- › Ask you to change into a hospital gown.
- › Give you acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to take by mouth.
- › Place an IV (into the vein) line to provide fluids and medications during your C-section.
- › Draw blood to check labs if this was not already done.
- › Monitor your baby's heart rate.
- › Clean and prepare your abdomen (belly). (Do not shave or wax your abdomen and pelvic area, including pubic hair, before surgery.)

Your care team will meet with you to review your delivery plan and answer your questions. The anesthesia team will talk with you about the anesthesia you will receive. They will ask you to sign consent forms. Your care team will take you to the operating room. Your support person will put on an operating room jumpsuit. They will join you before the start of surgery.

During your C-section delivery

- › Your healthcare team will place a spinal or epidural catheter into your back. This will make you numb and provide pain medication.
- › Your care team will place a catheter into your bladder to drain urine.
- › Your care team will use a sterile soap to ensure cleanliness.
- › Your baby will be delivered.
- › The nursing team will check your baby's health and vital signs.

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- › When you and your baby are ready, either you or your support person may hold the baby.
 - › When possible, your baby may be placed on your chest for skin-to-skin contact.

After your C-section delivery

After your surgery, your care team will bring you to a recovery area. There, they will monitor you for at least 2 hours.

- › The nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, incision and uterine tone frequently.
- › You will receive pain medication through your IV to manage your pain.
- › When possible, your baby may be placed on your chest for skin-to-skin contact.
- › You will have a chance to start feeding your baby.
- › After 30 minutes, you can drink clear liquids if there are no complications with your surgery. You may also chew gum.
- › When you are ready, your care team will take you and your baby to your room on the Postpartum Unit.

If you have any questions, please ask a member of your healthcare team.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](https://www.nm.org).