

CAESAREAN SECTION

The caesarean rate in Australia is around 30% - a caesarean is when the baby is born in an operating theatre via an incision in the lower abdomen, just above the pubic bone. It is considered major abdominal surgery. In most cases you will be awake but you will be given medicine so you don't feel anything.

ELECTIVE CAESAREAN

A caesarean can be elective [which means it is planned and you know the date your baby will be born] some reasons for an elective caesarean may include - you had a caesarean section with a previous baby and wish to have a repeat caesarean, you or your baby have a medical issue which means caesarean section may be safer, your placenta may be covering the opening of the cervix and a vaginal birth is not possible.

EMERGENCY CAESAREAN

Or, your caesarean may be an emergency, which means you would already be in labour, contracting and something happens where the baby needs to be born quickly. Some reasons for an emergency caesarean may include - your water breaking and the umbilical cord coming out before the baby, bleeding from the vagina, the baby's heartrate indicates she is in distress, your blood pressure is dangerously high. There are other reasons - always make sure the doctor has explained to you the reason for the caesarean.

You can usually have one person with you in the operating theatre - this may be your partner, your relative or other support person. There are usually a lot of other people in theatre - 2 surgeons, an anaesthetist, an anesthetic nurse, a scrub nurse, a scout nurse, a theatre technician, a midwife, [there might be] a neonatal/baby doctor too.

The midwife will go through a checklist asking you some questions, then a nurse in theatre will ask you some questions. They will do some checks which might include listening to the baby's heartbeat and take your blood pressure and temperature. You will be asked to put on a hospital gown and some stockings, your support person will change into hospital clothes.

AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

After the baby is born, you will be able to hold your baby if you feel like it and your baby is well. Your baby will stay with you until you are ready to go to the recovery room - some hospitals will allow the baby to be with you in recovery, others do not. If your baby is not allowed to stay with you, they will be taken to the postnatal ward to be weighed and dressed. Usually your partner or support person can go with them.

You might stay in recovery for about 45 minutes. When you are well enough, you will be taken to the postnatal ward to be with your baby.

If you have an emergency caesarean section, the same things happen but they happen faster. Your recovery will take longer after a caesarean, you cannot lift things heavier than your baby for about 6 weeks after and you may be advised that you cannot drive for six weeks.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

After the birth you will be offered regular medication for pain relief, this will help you to get up and move around and care for your baby after the operation.

You may need additional help around the house because you cannot lift heavy things [heavier than your baby] or drive a car for about six weeks after a caesarean section.

Your baby may be separated from you for a short time after the birth if they cannot be in the recovery room with you.

You may not get out of bed until the day after the operation.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Can I have my baby with me right after birth?

Can my baby come to the recovery room with me after the birth?

Do I have to wait until the next day to get out of bed?

Can my partner/support person be with me the whole time?

How long will I stay in hospital after the birth?

RESOURCES

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/caesarean-section>

<https://www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/pregnancy-and-birth/labour-birth/caesarean-birth>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pregnancy/labour-birth/vaginal-caesarean-birth/planned-caesarean>



DISCLAIMER

This information is not intended to be medical advice, it is a guide only. Please ask your midwife or doctor for information and advice directly related to your care and your baby's care.