



Overview

Believe it or not, your baby is almost here. You may have ideas about your baby's personality because of how much your baby moves. Or you may have noticed how your baby responds to sounds, warmth, cold, and light. You may even know what kind of music your baby likes. By now, you have a better idea of what to expect during delivery. You may have talked about your birth preferences with your doctor. But even if you want a vaginal birth, it's a good idea to learn about cesarean births. Cesarean birth means that your baby is born through a cut (incision) in your lower belly. In some cases it may be the best choice for the health of you and your baby.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Learn about cesarean birth

- **Most C-sections are unplanned and are done to ensure the safety of the mother or the baby.** They are done because of problems that occur during labor. These problems might include:
 - Labor that slows or stops.
 - High blood pressure or other problems for you.
 - Signs of distress in your baby. These signs may include a very fast or slow heart rate.
- Although you and your baby are likely do well after a C-section, it is major surgery. It has more risks than a vaginal delivery.
- In some cases, a planned C-section may be safer than a vaginal delivery. This may be the case if:
 - You have a health problem, such as a heart condition.
 - Your baby isn't in a head-down position for delivery. This is called a breech position.



38 weeks

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- The uterus has scars from past surgeries. This could increase the chance of a tear in the uterus.
- There is a problem with the placenta.
- You have an infection, such as genital herpes, that could be spread to your baby.
- You are having twins or more.
- Your baby weighs 9 to 10 pounds or more.
- Because of the risks of a C-section, planned C-sections generally should be done only for medical reasons. And a planned C-section should be done at 39 weeks or later unless there is a medical reason to do it sooner.

Know what to expect after delivery, and plan for the first few weeks at home

- You, your baby, and your partner or coach will get identification bands. Only people with matching bands can pick up the baby from the nursery.
- You will learn how to feed, diaper, and bathe your baby. And you will learn how to care for the umbilical cord stump. If your baby will be circumcised, you will also learn how to care for that.
- Ask people to wait to visit you until you are at home. And ask them to wash their hands before they touch your baby.
- Make sure you have another adult in your home for at least 2 or 3 days after the birth.
- During the first 2 weeks, limit when friends and family can visit.
- Do not allow visitors who have colds or infections. Make sure all visitors are up to date with their vaccinations. Never let anyone smoke around your baby.
- Try to nap when the baby naps.

Be aware of postpartum depression

- "**Baby blues**" are common for the first 1 to 2 weeks after birth. You may cry or feel sad or irritable for no reason.
- Sometimes these feelings last longer and are more intense. This is called **postpartum depression**.
- If your symptoms last for more than a few weeks or you feel very depressed, ask your doctor for help.
- Postpartum depression can be treated. Support groups and counseling can help. Sometimes medicine can also help.