



May 3, 2020

Cesarean Birth

Welcome to the Brigham and Women's Hospital, Center for Labor and Birth

What is a Cesarean Birth?

In a Cesarean Birth your doctor makes a cut through your belly and uterus (womb) to allow your baby to be born. This is a safe method of childbirth, thanks to today's techniques and our skilled doctors and nurses. However, a Cesarean is a major surgery. Doctors will plan this operation only when a medical problem would make labor dangerous for the mother or baby.

Before Coming to the Hospital

Blood tests:

- You must do some blood tests before your surgery. Often you will do these tests on the day you come into the hospital to have your baby.
- Sometimes your doctor or midwife wants you to do these tests before your baby is born. In this case they will ask you to come to the hospital one to three days before your scheduled cesarean.

COVID-19 testing:

- You will have a nasopharyngeal swab done two days prior to a scheduled admission. A nurse from the hospital will call you to set up outpatient testing, most likely at one of the drive-through locations.
- For add-on admissions, the testing will be done upon arrival. You may be asked to arrive a couple hours earlier to allow for test results to return.

Food and Drinks Before your Cesarean:

- Eight (8) Hours before Your Cesarean

Food: You cannot eat anything. Not even cough drops, chewing gum, or lifesaver.

Drinks: You may have the following clear liquids: water, soda, apple, or cranberry juice, sports drinks (such as Gatorade), black coffee or black tea. Sugar is OK in your coffee or tea, but no milk or other creamers.

- Two (2) Hours before your Cesarean:

Food: Still no food.

Drink: Please do not drink anything at all.

For example: if your Cesarean is scheduled for 8 o'clock in the morning, at 12 midnight the night before you must stop eating and drinking anything except water, soda, apple or cranberry juice, sports drinks (such as Gatorade), black coffee or black tea. This includes lifesavers, cough drops and chewing gum. And at 6 a.m., you must stop drinking anything at all.

Instructions about Your Medications

- Please tell your doctor all the medications you are taking, including over the counter medications such as vitamins and other supplements. Some of these can increase bleeding during surgery. Your doctor or midwife may ask you to stop taking them up to a week before your Cesarean.
- Bring your inhalers and/or eye drops with you to the hospital if you use them.
- You do not need to bring any other medications with you to the hospital.
- If you take insulin for diabetes, carefully follow your doctor's or midwife's instructions about how to take your insulin the night before and the day after your Cesarean. They may change your dose.

Some other important instructions

- Please remove all jewelry including wedding bands and body piercings, and leave them at home.
- Please do not wear perfume or cologne when coming to the hospital. Brigham and Women's hospital is free of fragrances, because of allergy and safety concerns. Please do not use any hair products, including hair spray, mousse, and other styling products. Please wash these products out of your hair, if needed. These products could catch fire in the operating room.

- Please do not wear polish on your fingernails. If you have artificial nails, please remove at least one from each hand. This way we can place a small device on your finger to measure the oxygen in your blood.
- If you wear contact lenses, please bring your glasses with you if you have them; the anesthesiologist may ask that you not wear your contact during your Cesarean.
- Please leave valuables at home. You may bring a cell phone or camera with you to take pictures of your new baby while you are in the labor and birth area. Your support person will not be allowed to take pictures of or video of the actual surgery.

Parking

You have two parking choices:

- The least expensive way to park is self-parking in the Service Center Garage. Located at the corner of Francis St. and Brookline Ave. If you arrive Monday through Friday before 5p.m., get your ticket validated at the front desk to receive the lowest parking rate.
- Valet parking is also available 24 hours a day at the main entrance of the hospital at 75 Francis Street.

In the Hospital, the Day of Your Cesarean

Before Surgery

- Please arrive at the hospital 2 hours before the scheduled time for your Cesarean.
- Come to the hospital's Main Entrance, 75 Francis St., and check in the Obstetrical Admitting Office, located in the main lobby.
- A person from the Admitting Office will accompany you to the reception desk in our unit, The Center for Labor and Birth.
- A nurse in the pre-surgery area will help you prepare for your Cesarean by doing a number of things, including: asking you questions about your medical history; taking your blood pressure, pulse and temperature; and starting an intravenous line (an "IV")

Visitors and Support People

- One healthy support person may go with you into the operating room during your Cesarean. The support person will be allowed up to the Labor floor once you have been admitted.
- Currently, no other visitors are allowed in the hospital.
- The Center for Labor and Birth is a unit with restricted entrance. All visitors must check in with a security officer. This is to protect the privacy of our patients as well as to ensure that our newborns are safe at all times.
- Your support person will receive a special bracelet that will serve as identification to the hospital staff.

In the Operating Room

Your Anesthesia

- Most women will have spinal anesthesia or epidural anesthesia for their Cesareans. With this type of anesthesia, you will not feel pain during your surgery, but you will be awake. You can talk to your support person during your cesarean. You can see your baby as soon as she or he is born.
- The doctors start the spinal or epidural anesthesia in the operating room. This process usually takes about 20 minutes. This is usually the only time your support person is not allowed to stay with you. Your nurse will be with you the entire time.
- Rarely, a woman will have general anesthesia (be asleep) for her Cesarean, instead of having spinal or epidural
- The anesthesiologist and your doctor will choose the best type of anesthesia for you, based on your medical history and current pregnancy. They will discuss choices you have and any decisions with you before giving you anesthesia.

Preparation in the Operating Room

- After starting your anesthesia, the nurse will place a thin tube in your bladder. You will not feel pain or discomfort, as you will already have your anesthesia. The nurse will also wash your belly to lower the risk of infections.
- The team will place surgical drapes and warm blankets on you.
- There will also be a drape in front of you, so that you will not see the surgery. However, you will have the option to see the baby through a clear window in the drape at the time of delivery.
- You will be able to talk to your anesthesiologist, and to your support person. You and your support person will be able to hold hands, if you wish.
- The team that will be taking care of you will be: your doctor, who will deliver your baby; another doctor who will assist your doctor with the surgery; your nurse; a surgical technologist (the person that passes the surgical instruments to your doctors); your anesthesiologist; and a doctor and nurse especially for your baby. The members of your team will introduce themselves to you. They will ask you to say your name, birth date, and the type of surgery you will have. This is all part of the safety checks we do for every Cesarean.

Your Surgery

- Your baby will usually be born shortly after the Cesarean starts. If you have had prior Cesarean or another kind of surgery on your belly, it may take longer to deliver your baby. This is normal.
- If you wish, the team can lower the surgical drape in front of you, at the moment of your baby's birth, so you can see him or her immediately, through a clear drape.
- The nurses will take your baby to a warm examining table (sometimes called "the warmer"), right in the operating room. A doctor and a nurse will briefly check the baby's health.
- Your support person may hold him or her right next to you (where you can see, touch and talk to your baby) until the end of your surgery- usually about 45-60 minutes.
- You will be in the operating room for a total of approximately 1 ½ to two hours.

After Giving Birth

- After your Cesarean, you will go to a recovery area. You will stay there for about 2-3 more hours. Your nurse will check your vital signs (blood pressure etc), comfort, and your incision (the cut in your belly).
- You can usually start breast-feeding shortly after arriving in the recovery room.
- Your support person and baby can remain with you.
- To protect your privacy, hospital staff cannot give any information to callers asking how you are doing. You will have a bedside telephone, and you are welcome to use a cell phone, tablet, or laptop to communicate with your family and friends.
- The typical stay after a Cesarean is 3-4 nights.

