

Caesarean birth

Information for the public

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Caesarean birth: the care you should expect

Most women give birth vaginally but up to a third have a caesarean birth (sometimes called a caesarean section or 'c-section'). In a caesarean birth, the baby is delivered through a surgical cut made in the woman's abdomen and womb. A caesarean birth is sometimes planned in advance, either because the woman chooses it or because it is the best option for the woman or her baby. It may also be done at short notice (an emergency caesarean) if the woman has a complication in her pregnancy or during labour. There are benefits and risks with each type of birth and these are different for each woman.

We want this guideline to make a difference to pregnant women, their babies, partners and families by making sure:

- women have better, more balanced discussions with healthcare professionals about the benefits and risks for them of each type of birth
- caesarean births are carried out in the safest way to reduce infections
- women get clearer advice about pain relief after caesarean birth, particularly if they are breastfeeding
- women are more closely monitored after a caesarean birth if they need it, while unnecessary checks are reduced.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- How do the benefits and risks of vaginal and caesarean birth apply to you, and do you have enough information to decide what matters most to you?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to vaginal or caesarean birth that you would like to ask more questions about?

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about caesarean section.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [National Childbirth Trust \(NCT\)](#), pregnancy and birth helpline 0300 33 00 700, details of local branches 0844 243 6000
- [Birth Trauma Association](#)
- [Twins Trust](#), 0800 138 0509

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with women who have had a caesarean birth or their families or carers, and healthcare professionals involved in their care. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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