



# Your next birth

## Choosing what option is right for you



If you are pregnant and have had a caesarean, you will need to think about your next birth. There are two options to choose from, Vaginal Birth After Caesarean (VBAC) or a Repeat Elective Caesarean Section.

We suggest you and your support person read the NSW Health brochure 'Your Next Birth after Caesarean' [www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/Publications/birth-after-caesarean-english.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/Publications/birth-after-caesarean-english.pdf).

VBAC is safe for most women. National and international research shows that the majority of women (63–94%) succeed in delivering vaginally after a caesarean. There are a number of factors that can mean a VBAC is successful, including the reason for the previous caesarean section. Each individual situation is different.

You will need to discuss your plan of care with your midwife and doctor at your Antenatal Clinic visit. How you choose to give birth to your baby is your choice.

### What happens if you choose a VBAC?

It is best if you wait for spontaneous labour rather than being induced. There is a small risk of your previous scar opening during labour. For this reason, you will be closely monitored once your labour has established (usually when you are having regular contractions about every 5 minutes and your cervix is about 4cm dilated). It is recommended that you have electronic monitoring of your baby's heartbeat (external monitoring on your stomach held by two soft belts) until your baby is born. You will also need to have a drip placed in your hand or arm.

Your midwife or doctor will regularly assess your progress in labour. This will be done by feeling your stomach to assess the strength of contractions and to monitor your baby's position, and by vaginal examination to assess how your cervix is dilating. If your labour progresses slowly it may be possible to use Syntocinon™, a hormone drip, to help your contractions. This will be done with care due to the scar from your previous caesarean section. If the labour does not progress or if the baby shows signs of distress you will be advised to have an emergency caesarean section.

Potential risk comparisons	VBAC	Repeat Elective Caesarean Section
Uterine rupture	1:200 (0.5%)	1:3000 (0.03%)
Anaesthetic risk	Lower	Higher
Blood loss	Lower	Higher
Perineal tears	Risk	Nil
Emergency lower segment caesarean section	1:4 (25%)	N/A
Blood clots	Lower	Higher
Infection	Lower	Higher
Recovery	Faster	Slower
Hospital stay	Shorter	Longer
Convenience	No	Yes (can schedule the birth)

Vaginal birth after caesarean	
Possible benefits	Possible risks and problems
<p><b>For you:</b> Vaginal births generally have fewer risks than caesarean deliveries. Possible benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the experience of a vaginal birth</li> <li>• less risk of infection</li> <li>• less blood loss</li> <li>• less chance of blood clots in the legs and lungs</li> <li>• less chance of injury to the bladder or uterus</li> <li>• less pain after the birth</li> <li>• shorter hospital stay</li> <li>• faster recovery and return to normal activities</li> <li>• more opportunity for family and friends to share in the birth</li> </ul> <p><b>For your baby:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• less risk of breathing difficulties</li> </ul>	<p><b>For you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bleeding</li> <li>• complications in labour that then lead to needing an emergency caesarean (risks can be higher in this situation compared to having a scheduled elective caesarean)</li> <li>• uterine rupture (studies show that this occurs in 1:200 births)</li> <li>• hysterectomy (removal of the uterus)</li> <li>• brain damage or death (very rare)</li> </ul> <p><b>For your baby:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no extra risk to the baby (except in the life threatening case of uterine rupture)</li> </ul>
Planned (scheduled) caesarean	
<p>If you have a planned caesarean, the benefits may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no labour pain</li> <li>• convenience (you potentially have some control over the timing of your caesarean)</li> <li>• less risk of unexpected uterine rupture and the need for an emergency caesarean</li> </ul>	<p><b>For you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A caesarean is major abdominal surgery</li> <li>• Compared to a vaginal birth, the recovery is longer. If there are complications during surgery, the risk of potential problems include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• infection</li> <li>• need for a blood transfusion</li> <li>• injury to the bladder and/or other internal organs</li> <li>• blood clots in the legs or lungs</li> <li>• increased likelihood of needing a caesarean for future births, each with an increased risk of complications</li> <li>• brain damage or death (very rare)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>For your baby:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased risk of breathing problems</li> <li>• extreme sleepiness after the birth (if mother has received a general anaesthetic)</li> </ul>



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