

Your delivery

Preparing for a caesarean



You'll soon give birth to your child by caesarean. This fact sheet explains what happens, how to prepare, and what to do afterwards.

Why am I being given this fact sheet?

Your doctor has recommended this operation, or you've chosen it based on your medical history and previous pregnancies. Usually, a caesarean is done when vaginal delivery presents a risk for the health of the mother or the baby.

What are the risks associated with this operation?

They are rare. Your doctor will discuss them with you.

When will my caesarean be done?

Someone will call you with the date and time. Sometimes, you'll be given an appointment for the next day.



APPOINTMENT

Date :

Time :

You'll need to come to the hospital at least **2 hours before** the time scheduled for your caesarean.



How should I prepare for a caesarean?

Follow the instructions below to reduce the risks, avoid pain, and recover more quickly after the operation.



ATTENTION

If, at any time before the scheduled caesarean, you have labour symptoms (such as contractions or loss of fluid) or any worries related to the pregnancy or the baby, contact the obstetric triage team.

Tel. :

EATING

Eat and drink normally up to **8 hours before** your caesarean. From then on, drink only clear liquids (such as water, apple juice, or cranberry juice) until **6:00 a.m.** the morning of the caesarean, unless your doctor gives you other instructions. If you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, only drink until **4:00 a.m.**



If this fast is not respected, your caesarean may be postponed.

SKIN CARE

Take a bath or shower the morning of your caesarean. Shave your lower abdomen and upper pubic area. We can help you if you can't do it.

SMOKING

Don't smoke within 24 hours before your caesarean.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Do physical activity in the days before your caesarean. For example, walk outdoors or do yoga.

How long does the operation take?

Usually the caesarean takes less than one hour. Your baby will be born a few minutes after the start of the operation. You can keep the baby with you during the rest of the caesarean.

Will I be able to have skin-to-skin contact with my baby?

Yes. In fact, skin-to-skin contact is strongly encouraged right after birth, during the rest of the caesarean.

Can my partner be present during the operation?

Yes. Your partner or the person of your choosing can be with you during the caesarean.

Will I have pain?

You'll see the anesthetist the morning of the caesarean, who will answer your questions. Before the operation, you'll be given acetaminophen (Tylenol) to prevent pain. In the operating room, a product will be injected into your lower back to block pain from your breasts down to your toes. You'll also be given medication to prevent pain after the caesarean.

You won't be able to move your legs for an hour or two. You'll need help to get around during this time.

Are there any precautions to take AFTER the caesarean?

The following advice can help you recover faster:

- > With a nurse's help, sit on the edge of your bed within 4 hours after the caesarean.
- > Also with help, walk within 8 hours after the caesarean. You need to walk once or twice within the first 24 hours.
- > The day after your caesarean, walk up to 4 times and stay out of bed for at least 8 hours.
- > Do breathing exercises every hour. See the fact sheet [*Exercices respiratoires après une opération*](#) (French only).
- > Don't let your pain level go above 4 out of 10 (10 being the worst pain imaginable). It's more difficult to relieve strong pain than moderate pain. Ask the nurse for pain medication as needed.

The urinary catheter (which is installed before the caesarean to protect the bladder) should be removed by a nurse within 4 to 6 hours after the operation.



How do I take care of my incision?

During the first 24 hours, don't remove the dressing and don't wet it. It will be removed before you leave. If you have Steri-Strips or stitches, they will dissolve on their own. If you have staples, the CLSC will remove them within 3 to 7 days.

With Steri-Strips or staples, you can shower, but don't rub the incision, and make sure to dry it well afterwards. Leave it exposed to the air as much as possible.

When will I be able to eat afterwards?

To recover faster, follow these instructions:

- > Drink water and eat ice cubes in the first hour after the caesarean.
- > When you're in your room, have a meal or a snack within 4 hours after the caesarean. Go slowly, paying attention to any nausea.

The hospital provides meals, but you can also bring your favourite foods from home.

Are there medications to take?

At the hospital, you'll take pain medications (analgesics and anti-inflammatories) regularly. At home, keep taking them as prescribed to control your pain. Take anti-inflammatories with food to prevent stomach upsets.

For your comfort, take a dose 30 minutes before sitting down or getting up. If the products aren't strong enough, you can ask for opioids (such as morphine or Dilaudid). If you take these, you should also take laxatives to avoid constipation.

You'll also take medications for nausea, vomiting, and chills, as needed. To prevent blood clots, you may be given injections of blood-thinning drugs (anticoagulants).

Depending on your type of contraception, be sure to get a prescription before leaving the hospital. If you don't yet know what contraception you'll take, use condoms, even if you're breastfeeding. You can discuss this at the postpartum visit, 6 weeks after the caesarean.

What should I do after my hospital discharge?

You'll find advice on contraception, taking care of your incision, and restarting your activities in the fact sheet [*Taking care of yourself in the first days following a caesarean section.*](#)



USEFUL RESOURCES

To learn more about pregnancy, delivery, or follow-up care, visit our website.



Videos, other fact sheets, and more resources are available at:

centredesnaissanceschum.com

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca

Reminder - what you need to do before and after your caesarean.

1 Before my caesarean

- Prepare my personal effects and those for the baby (see the fact [Your Stay at the Birthing Centre](#)).
- Take a bath or shower.
- Stop eating 8 hours before the caesarean, at :
- Stop drinking at 6:00 a.m. (4:00 a.m. if I have type 1 or type 2 diabetes).
- For any worries related to the pregnancy or the baby (start of labour, reduced fetal movement), call the obstetric triage team.

2 After my caesarean

- Eat ice cubes or drink water within the first hour.
- When I'm in my room, have a meal or snack within the next four hours.
- With a nurse's help, sit at the edge of the bed within the next 4 hours.
- Again with help, walk within the next 8 hours.
- Don't let my pain level go higher than 4 out of 10.
- Do breathing exercises every hour.

3 Before my discharge

- Walk up to 4 times a day.
- Stay out of bed at least 8 hours a day.
- Take my pain medications to be more comfortable.
- Ask for a contraceptive prescription.