

Cesarean Delivery

When choosing the best way for you to deliver your baby, the safety of both you and your baby will be your doctor's first priority. A Cesarean section is the surgical delivery of a baby and placenta through an incision in the lower abdomen. There are many reasons for women to deliver babies by Cesarean section. Some of those reasons are:

- Breech or other abnormal presentation of the baby in the uterus
- Insufficient progress in labor, or inability of the baby's head to descend through the pelvis during the pushing stage of labor
- Macrosomia (a larger baby than is safe to deliver vaginally)
- Non-reassuring fetal heart tracing before or during labor
- Placenta problems (placenta covering the cervix or separating from the wall of the uterus before or during labor)
- History of a previous difficult vaginal delivery
- Active Herpes lesions at the time labor begins
- Severe pre-eclampsia or certain other medical problems

While imagining delivering your baby in an operating room may not be what you had anticipated, we are sure you will find your experience here at the Women's Center to be comfortable and fulfilling for you and your family. This teaching sheet was designed to describe a Cesarean delivery for you, so that you will feel prepared for your baby's birth, and feel more informed of your understanding of the procedure.

When you and your doctor or midwife have planned a Cesarean delivery, you will be asked to refrain from eating or drinking anything after midnight the night before, and to come to the Maternity Unit on the 3rd floor of the Women's Center on the morning of your delivery. If your delivery is scheduled for 8:00 am, you will need to arrive at 6:00 am, and if your delivery is to be at noon, you will need to arrive at the Maternity unit at 10:00 am. Being there early allows for every aspect of your pre-operative care to be completed without having to rush. It is also important that you remove all of your jewelry before surgery (most women prefer to leave jewelry at home).

You and your family members will be greeted by your nurse when you arrive, and then shown to your room in the Maternity unit. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown for delivery, and to give a urine sample for the nurse. Your Anesthesiologist and Nurse Anesthetist will visit you briefly during this time to answer any questions you may have, and to review your medical history. You may also meet the Pediatrician or Neonatal Nurse Practitioner while you are being prepared for delivery, so that you will be able to ask questions related to the baby's care after birth.



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After you are settled in bed, the nurse will attach the fetal monitor to your abdomen, so that your baby's heart rate can be evaluated until delivery. Your nurse will place an IV in your arm and send pre-operative blood tests for your doctor to review before surgery. A small area of your abdomen will be shaved, and a catheter will be inserted into your bladder. Having the catheter in place keeps your bladder empty which allows your doctor more room to deliver your baby. You will be asked to sign an operative consent for surgery, and will be given a small amount of antacid to drink before going to the operating room. And now, you are just about ready for the big moment!

Your family will be asked to wait in your room while you are taken (in your bed) to the operating room. At the Women's Center, our two operative suites are located right across the hall from your room, so that you are never more than a moment away from your family and the nursery.

For most Cesarean deliveries, epidural or spinal anesthesia is used to keep you comfortable and awake during the surgery. This very safe type of anesthesia will make your abdomen and legs numb. It takes about 10 minutes for the epidural/spinal catheter to be placed in your back and as soon as this is completed, your family support person will be brought to join you for the delivery. Your support person will be seated right next to your head at the top end of your bed in the operating room. He or she will be able to hold your hand and talk with you throughout the procedure. A sterile drape will be placed like a short wall at about the level of your chest that will protect your abdomen from contamination. During the procedure the Anesthesiologist and your doctor will talk to you periodically to keep you apprised of each step in the delivery.

A Cesarean section usually takes about 30 minutes to complete, and the baby is delivered fairly quickly after beginning. The Pediatrician or Nurse Practitioner will receive and initially evaluate your baby, and then will wrap the baby in warm blankets and bring him or her to you to spend a few minutes with. During the time you are spending with your new baby, your doctor is completing the surgery and preparing you to return to your room. Just before you are ready to leave the operating suite, the Pediatric staff will take your baby to the newborn nursery to weigh and measure. Your support person may wish to go along with the baby to the nursery. Soon after you return to your room and are feeling well enough to hold your baby, the nursery nurse will bring him or her to you where you will remain as a family unless you request that the baby return to the nursery.

Your nurse will remain close to you the entire first day after your delivery, and she will assist you to get out of bed later that day and will also help you in any other way that you need. Your support person is welcome to spend every minute with you in the hospital and a sofa bed is in your room for him or her to sleep in. A typical hospital stay with a Cesarean delivery is three days. You will have ample time to ask questions, learn to care for your surgical incision and for your new son or daughter. You will receive further written instructions about how to care for yourself after returning home from the hospital.

We hope you are looking forward to the birth of your child, and that you will ask any questions that you or your family may have about the delivery.

Congratulations from all of us at North Florida Women's Physicians!