

Postnatal caesarean birth recovery

Most people experience some discomfort or pain for first few days after a caesarean birth.

The pain could last for a few weeks and you'll be given advice on how to manage it. This can be by taking pain medication as prescribed but can also be improved by regular movement like taking a short walk on the ward.

Tip 1: Some people also experience dizziness, but this will improve by keeping hydrated, eating well and pacing your activities.

Tip 2: Try to take regular deep breaths into your tummy to help keep your chest clear as soon as you feel able to.

Tip 3: If you feel like you need to cough, gently support your wound with a rolled-up towel or your hands. You can also use this support technique when sneezing, laughing or changing positions.

Tip 4: To prevent any blood clots developing in your calves, circle and pump your ankles up and down regularly to increase blood flow or take a short walk.

You'll have had a thin flexible plastic tube called a catheter inserted into your bladder before the caesarean. Around 12 hours after birth the catheter will be removed. It's important that you have practiced walking to the toilet before it is removed.

For information on how to look after your bladder once the catheter is removed, please see the video linked in the description.

Some people experience a reduced bladder sensation or an increased urgency to pass urine or open their bowels. You might have accidents of urine leakage due to weakened pelvic floor muscles, even after a caesarean birth. These symptoms should improve after a few weeks as your pelvic floor muscles get stronger. Please seek support from your healthcare professional if these symptoms continue after six weeks.

You should begin to exercise your deep tummy muscles as soon as you can, ideally the day after your caesarean birth. Exercising these muscles will help to support your back and pelvis and increase the blood flow to your caesarean scar to help with healing.

To exercise your deep tummy muscles, imagine you are drawing your belly button in towards your spine. Aim to hold this muscle in for ten seconds, repeating ten times in a row. Ideally this should be done three times a day.

You can start pelvic floor exercises 24 hours after birth or once your catheter is removed. For more information on how to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles please see the video linked in the description.

After birth, gradually increase the distance you walk every day, keeping in your comfort levels.

For the first few weeks after birth avoid any activity that causes strain and don't lift anything heavier than your baby for at least six weeks. If you have other small children, encourage them to climb up to you when you are sitting down rather than bending to pick them up.

It is a good idea when you to lift your baby, car seat or buggy to brace your core muscles. This is a gentle squeezing of your deep tummy muscles and pelvic floor at the same time.

This bracing will help to support you and protect your stitches, back and pelvic floor from weakening.

If you have any other questions about your recovery following your birth, please ask a healthcare professional.

For information on how to return to exercise after your caesarean birth please see the video linked in the description.