Preparing for Your C-section

Adapted with permission from Preparing for Your C-Section, March 2017, University of Washington Medical Center, Seattle, Washington.
In the Weeks Before

• Talk with your doctor about your birth control plan
• Sign consents for surgery
• Eat a healthy, balanced diet
• Choose your *pediatric provider* for your new baby

Adapted with permission from *Preparing for Your C-Section, March 2017, University of Washington Medical Center, Seattle, Washington.*
Showers Before Your C-section

Your nurse will give you a packet with 2 chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) cloths.

**Shower #1: Night Before Surgery**
- Use your regular soap (such as Dial). Clean your body well. Do **not** shave any area of your body that is near the surgical site. Dry off with a clean towel.
- Then, use one of the CHG cloths to wipe the **front of your body**. Wipe from below your breasts, over your abdomen, and down to your upper thighs. Do **not** wipe your genital area.
- Allow your skin to air dry. Dress in clean bedclothes.

**Shower #2: Morning of Surgery**
- Shower again with regular soap. Do **not** shave any area of your body that is near the surgical site. Dry off with a clean towel.
- Then, use the 2nd CHG cloth to wipe the **front of your body**, the same as you did last night.
- Allow your skin to air dry. Do **not** apply hair products, deodorants, lotions, or fragrances.
- Dress in clean clothes and come to the hospital as planned.

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Eating Before

• You may eat and drink as usual until 8 hours before your C-section.

• 8 hours before your C-section, drink 8 ounces of apple juice.

• Keep drinking clear liquids until 2 hours before your C-section.

• 2 hours before your C-section, drink 8 ounces of apple juice, after that, do not take anything by mouth, even water.

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Stopping Medicines

Ask your doctor to review all the medicines you are taking. You may need to stop taking some of them for a few days or longer before your C-section.
When to Arrive

Ask your doctor what time your surgery is scheduled.

Plan to arrive at the Birth Center 2 hours before that time, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

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Your Support Person

- May be with you in your Birth Center room.
- Will wait outside the operating room (OR) until we call them to come into the room.
- Will sit near your head during the surgery.
- Can help hold your baby in the OR after delivery.

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Birth Center

In the Birth Center, you will:

• Sign consent forms for surgery, if not already done
• Meet with the anesthesia team
• Meet with the delivery team

A nurse will:

• Place an *intravenous* (IV) line in your arm
• Draw blood so we perform necessary labs
• Clip your pubic hair
• Start a fetal heart rate monitor so we can check your baby’s heart rate

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Before Surgery

In the OR:
• You will drink an antacid drink.
• The anesthesia team will give you spinal anesthesia or place an epidural.
• You will start to feel numb from your breasts to your toes.
• A nurse will:
  - Place wraps (SCDs) on your legs to prevent blood clots
  - Wash your abdomen
  - Place a catheter in your bladder to drain urine

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In the Operating Room (OR)

• You will be in the OR for about 60 to 90 minutes. Most times, the baby is delivered within the first 10 minutes.

• After delivery:
  - If it is safe, we will bring your baby to you for skin-to-skin holding and help you start breastfeeding.
  - If extra care is needed, we will take your baby to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).
  - If needed, we will place a wound vacuum. Your doctor will talk with you about this.

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Right After Surgery

After the surgery:
• You will return to your Birth Center room to rest.
• Nurses will take your vital signs often.
• Feeling in your legs will start to return as the anesthesia wears off.
• You can begin to eat and drink.

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Recovery in Postpartum

• We encourage you to walk often, with help. Walking will help you heal. Plan to walk in the halls several times a day.
• Your appetite may be lower after surgery. You may need to eat smaller meals at first.
• We will help you with breastfeeding.
• We will remove your bladder catheter.

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Pain Control

Most times, medicine you receive during surgery will help control pain for 12 to 18 hours after surgery.

As needed, you will also receive:

• Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
• A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (Advil) or ketorolac
• Opioid pain medicine (oxycodone or hydromorphone)

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen will be your main pain medicines. Opioids will be given only if needed.

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Scheduled Medicine

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Tylenol</th>
<th>Ibuprofen</th>
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<td>Tylenol 1000 mg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 AM</td>
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<td>Ibuprofen 600 mg</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 AM</td>
<td>Tylenol 1000 mg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ibuprofen 600 mg</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>Tylenol 1000 mg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 PM</td>
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<td>Ibuprofen 600 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you continue to have severe pain despite taking these medicines, you can take 5mg of oxycodone to help manage your pain.

You should wait at least 3 hours between doses of oxycodone.

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Other Medicines

You may also receive these other medicines while you are in the hospital:

• Bowel medicines (constipation is common, especially if you take opioids)
• Anti-nausea medicines
• Anti-heartburn medicines
• RhoGAM (if needed)
• Birth control (if desired)
Going Home

Most women go home 2 days after their C-section. Before you leave the hospital, we want to make sure you can:

• **Walk** without help
• **Eat** without nausea or vomiting
• **Urinate** (pee) as usual
• **Control your pain** with only pain pills

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Discharge Medicines

When you leave the hospital, you will keep taking these medicines at home:

• Pain medicines:
  - Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
  - Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)
  - Opioids, if needed

• Bowel medicines (to prevent constipation)

• Birth control (if desired)

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Pain Control at Home

• Take your pain medicines as prescribed.
• If you are taking opioids:
  - Do **not** drive while you are taking opioids.
  - Taper (decrease) your dose over the first week you are home. To do this, first start taking a lower dose. Then, allow more time between doses until you are no longer taking any opioids.

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Self-Care at Home

• Take walks. Walking will help your body heal.
• Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.
• You may shower. Let the water run gently over your incision. Do not scrub your incision.
• You may have a dressing or white tape (called steri-strips) over your incision. If they do not fall off on their own, please remove them after 1 week.

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Activity Restrictions

For 6 weeks after your C-section:

• Limit your household chores. Do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds.) Ask for help as needed.

• Do **not** use tampons, have sex, or put anything else in your vagina.

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Warning Signs

Call us if you have any of these problems:

– Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
– Chills
– Nausea or vomiting, or both
– Redness, warmth, or drainage at your incision
– Severe pain
– Heavy bleeding from your vagina
– Constipation that lasts more than 3 days

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