



BREASTFEEDING AFTER A CESAREAN

Having a cesarean birth will not affect your body's ability to produce breast milk. Just as in a vaginal delivery, the normal hormonal process that stimulates milk production begins as soon as the placenta is removed from the uterus. If your cesarean delivery is planned, you can prepare ahead of time by discussing your desire to breastfeed your baby with your health care provider. Once you are at the hospital you can remind the hospital staff before the surgery that you want to breastfeed early and often. If you have an unexpected cesarean delivery, you can still breastfeed, even if medical complications prevent you from nursing immediately after delivery. Ask that your baby be brought to you as soon as possible after a cesarean delivery. Breastfeeding often in the early days will bring you and your baby emotionally and physically close and give you a sense of confidence, knowing that your body can nourish your baby. If you had general anesthesia, you may be feeling groggy and not fully conscious. As soon as you are feeling more alert, and as long as you and your baby are both doing well, try to have your baby with you in your room as much as possible. If you or your baby need special care, and the start of breastfeeding is delayed for more than 24 to 48 hours, you may need to work with a lactation specialist to express your breast milk.

Pain medication may be necessary for several days after a cesarean delivery. Your doctor can prescribe medication that is safe for both you and your baby. Because you are recovering from surgery, you may have difficulty finding a comfortable position to nurse your baby. It may be necessary to ask for help from the nursing staff or your partner. It is important to find a position that will not harm your incision or cause you discomfort. While your incision is healing, the side-lying position, in which you are lying on your side facing your baby with his head at nipple level, works well. Putting pillows behind your back and one between your legs will offer support in this position. If you prefer to sit up, the clutch hold position keeps the baby's weight off your abdomen. In this position the baby is tucked under your arm like a clutch handbag so that his legs are behind you and his face is looking up at you. Breastfeeding after a cesarean delivery may be a bit more challenging, since the healing process takes somewhat longer than a normal vaginal delivery--but nursing your baby will be just as rewarding!

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