

## What happens if I go into labour prematurely?

For women who labour prematurely (who have had a previous caesarean delivery) the success rate is approximately 75%, but there is a lower risk of uterine rupture. Therefore if this happens you may decide to continue with the labour even though you were planning an elective caesarean. This will be discussed with you when you are seen at the hospital.

## What happens if I labour before my booked caesarean section?

We have the facilities to offer caesarean section 24 hours a day, so don't worry about going into labour before the date you have been given for caesarean. However, you may decide that if you are in established labour on admission to continue in labour rather than opt at this stage for a caesarean. If this is the case then let the midwife looking after you know.

You can of course opt to continue with your plans for caesarean section and provided you are not in advanced labour, caesarean delivery will be arranged.

## Any questions?

If you have any questions or need any further information, please speak to your midwife.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690



## Vaginal birth after caesarean section (VBAC)



## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for pregnant women who have previously had a caesarian section. It provides information on having a vaginal birth after caesarian (known as VBAC) and aims to help you decide whether this is right for you.

The information is a guide only – please speak to your midwife if you have any further questions.

## Can anyone have a VBAC?

If you have previously had straightforward caesarean sections, it is usually possible for you to have a VBAC after discussion with your medical team.

## How successful is VBAC?

About 3 out of 4 women with a straightforward pregnancy who go into labour will have a successful vaginal birth. This is similar to women who are in their first pregnancies.

If however you have had a vaginal birth, either before or after your caesarean delivery, about 9 out of 10 women will have a vaginal birth.

## What are the benefits?

If VBAC is successful:

- major surgery is avoided, along with its associated complications
- there is less abdominal pain after birth
- you will have a shorter stay in hospital
- recovery time is quicker and you can begin to get back to normal activity as soon as baby is born

- you will have a greater chance of an uncomplicated normal birth in the future
- it reduces the chance of baby having breathing problems by 1-2%.

## Is VBAC safe for me and my baby?

There are a few potential risks of VBAC and these include:

- risk of the scar in the uterus opening – this would result in an emergency caesarean section and could be serious for both mother and baby. The risk of this happening is only 0.5%. This risk is increased 2 to 3 times if you are induced, and therefore the reasons and benefits of induction of labour need to be carefully considered in the light of this extra scar risk.
- 2% increased risk of requiring a blood transfusion or having an infection in the uterus compared to women having a planned caesarean section.
- Very small risk to baby of death or serious brain damage – this is no different than the risk of women having their first birth (about 2 in 1,000). It is however higher than the risk with a planned caesarean section.

## Does anything different happen when I am in labour?

It is important that you labour in a consultant-led unit so that should any problems arise during your labour appropriate health professionals are available to look after you and your baby.

Your baby's heart beat will be monitored throughout the whole of your labour to monitor for any signs of distress and for any early signs of a problem with the caesarean section scar.

## Can I have my VBAC at Truro Birth Centre?

A birth centre or home birth is not the recommended or medically advised place of birth. However, you may consider Truro Birth Centre as your chosen place of birth if you have had only one previous caesarean section before and have no other factors that would not meet Truro Birth Centre's criteria.

The national recommendation of continuous monitoring of your baby's heartbeat cannot be facilitated at any birth centre or home and therefore early signs of scar rupture may not be picked up. Although Truro Birth Centre is close to the obstetric-led unit if a scar rupture or emergency were to occur, evacuation from the pool and transfer takes time and may result in a worse outcome for you and baby and cause them more serious harm, than if you were already on Delivery Suite.

Should you choose to labour in Truro Birth Centre, it is on the understanding that if there is a suspected delay in your labour or any concern with you or your baby's heartbeat, that you are transferred to the obstetric-led unit (Delivery Suite) to continue your care.

Home or standalone birth centres are not suitable environments for a VBAC due to the vastly increased transfer times to hospital.