


Vaginal Birth After Caesarean (VBAC)



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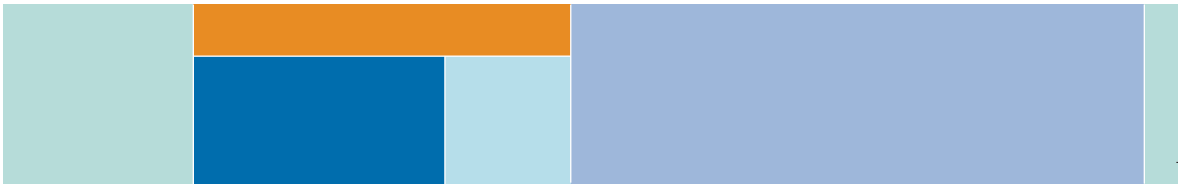


This leaflet will explain what a VBAC is, what the risks and benefits are, and will answer some of your questions.

What is a VBAC?

'VBAC' is short for 'Vaginal Birth After Caesarean'. Many women who have previously had a Caesarean will be able to give birth vaginally the next time around. VBACs are offered at both the City Hospital campus and the Queen's Medical Centre campus.

Benefits

- Many women want to avoid further major surgery
 - VBAC gives you the opportunity of a less 'medicalised' and more natural approach to labour and birth
 - Avoiding a Caesarean section often results in a quicker return to normal everyday activities, and following normal birth you can usually go home as soon as you wish
 - There is less chance of infection, thrombosis (blood clots), or the need for a blood transfusion if you have a vaginal birth than if you choose to have a planned Caesarean section
 - When babies are born normally their breathing may settle more quickly
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- Mothers report a greater satisfaction after a vaginal birth

Risks or disadvantages

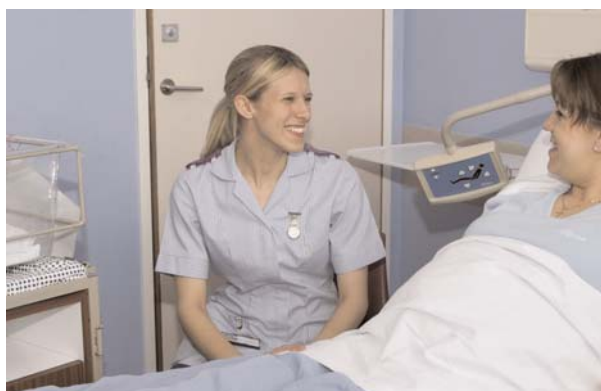
- The main risk is that during your labour it could become apparent that you will be unable to give birth vaginally and so require another Caesarean section
- There is a small risk of the scar on the womb from the previous Caesarean section separating during your labour. Many large studies have suggested this risk is less than 1%, but that it may even occur if you are not in labour. If this occurs then an emergency Caesarean section will be necessary. Very rarely the scar may rupture, which is more serious. If this happens, there is a risk that you may need a hysterectomy following the birth of your baby.

What will happen during my VBAC?

If you have had a previous Caesarean section it is advisable to have your labour and birth in the hospital. This is because if you need another Caesarean section it can be arranged immediately.



- Because there is a chance of another Caesarean section, we advise that you have a venflon (small plastic needle placed in the back of your hand). This means that the midwife or doctor can attach a drip should it be necessary. We also suggest taking a blood sample. This gives us the most up to date blood count and means we can prepare a blood transfusion should that be necessary
- We also advise that we check your baby is coping well during your labour by using continuous electronic fetal monitoring. There is a separate leaflet 'Fetal Monitoring in Labour' which your midwife can give you. However this can easily be done if you wish to remain upright and mobile, choosing whatever position you find helpful
- You can have whatever pain relief you would like. There is a separate leaflet 'Positive ways to manage pain in labour' which your midwife can give you





Can I decide my method of birth?


For some women, there are very good reasons why deciding on another Caesarean section is very sensible for either you or your baby's safety. However, VBAC is a very reasonable choice for most women. If you have had one vaginal birth already, you are more likely to have a successful VBAC. It is important to make your decision with the help of your midwife and doctor. When you discuss with your midwife and doctor about your labour and birth, these are the points you need to consider:

- Why did you have your first Caesarean section?
- Have you had more than one Caesarean section?
- What sort of scar was made?

When you have made your decision, a plan will be made which will be written into your hand-held notes, and also in the hospital records.

Will I go into labour naturally?

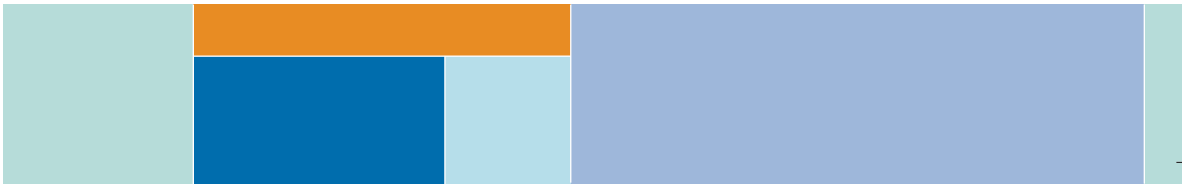
Yes – it is very likely that you will. However, in some circumstances it is possible that your labour may need to be induced (started off). As there are risks with an induction when you have had a Caesarean section before, your doctor and midwife will have further discussion with you.





Will the midwife still look after me?

Yes – you will be ‘booked’ under the care of the Consultant obstetrician, but you will always have a midwife to look after you during your labour and birth.





Further Information

The information in this leaflet is gained from guidelines which midwives and doctors use all the time. They are from local and national guidelines, and are produced from research. Your midwife or doctor can give you more information should you require it.

<http://nuh.nhs.uk>

<http://nice.org.uk>

Fetal monitoring in labour (NUH leaflet)

Positive ways to manage pain in labour (NUH leaflet)

Types of birth (NUH leaflet)

Queen's Medical Centre Campus labour suite: 875 4672

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