

*With knowledge we
can make choices*

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Please phone if you would like to receive a FREE information pack and find out more about Birthrites.

For \$25Aus you can support Birthrites: Healing After Caesarean Inc. to continue offering education and support about caesarean birth and vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC). Subscribers will receive our magazine

Birthing Beautifully as it is produced through the year.

The subscription fee covers printing and postage—we are a not-for-profit organisation.

Birthrites: Healing After Caesarean Inc may be able to help if..

- You would like to talk about your caesarean birth experience
- You are worried about what your next birth experience will be like.

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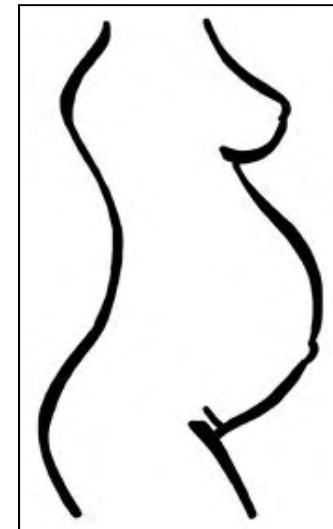
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Information for women about Caesarean Birth...

*Making
Informed Choices*



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During a caesarean birth, the baby is born through a surgical incision in the mothers' pregnant belly. A caesarean birth can be elective (planned), usually occurring prior to labour, or can be an emergency procedure, most often occurring after labour has begun.



Medical reasons for elective caesareans include placental problems (like placenta previa), the baby being in a transverse position, if the mother has severe pre-eclampsia,¹ and maternal active genital herpes.

A caesarean birth may also be recommended by some caregivers for a variety of other reasons, although natural birth can often be achieved in these situations. These include: having had a previous caesarean, if the baby is in a breech position, multiple births, and choice of the mother/parents,² high blood pressure, and suspected CPD (cephalo- pelvic disproportion) ie. big baby/small pelvis.³

Reasons for emergency caesareans include: failed induction, prolonged labour that's not progressing, distress of the mother or baby, placental problems (bleeding, separations, etc) and undiagnosed foetal position (i.e. breech, brow presentation, etc).³

Caesarean birth can prevent infant and maternal injury or death in some cases and should always be considered as a possible option for birth. The caesarean procedure has become less dangerous, as anaesthetic and surgical skills improve, but birthing a child via major surgery, if it is not medically necessary, is still not as safe as birthing your child naturally.

There are **risks and consequences** of caesarean birth for both the mother and baby. The mother is exposed to the risks of the anaesthetic and surgery. There may be increased blood loss and greater likelihood of an emergency hysterectomy.⁴ There can be damage to the bladder or intestines, and the possibility of wound infection.⁵ There is the potential for blood clots to form in the deep veins of the leg or pelvis; rarely these clots can travel to the lungs, causing life-threatening pulmonary embolus.⁶ Overall, the chance of a mother dying is 4 times greater if she has a caesarean than a vaginal birth.⁷ Women are generally less satisfied with their birth experience; less confident with their babies; more fatigued and less likely to breastfeed.⁸ Many women also experience interruption to the bonding process with their baby after a caesarean birth. This is an extremely important emotional outcome of caesarean birth that impacts on the whole family.

Risks for the baby born via caesarean include: respiratory distress syndrome, prematurity (elective caesareans often occur 2-4 weeks before the baby is likely to be born),⁹ and being cut by the scalpel during the operation.¹⁰ They are five times more likely to need intensive care treatment after birth.¹¹

Birthing via caesarean may also effect women's **future pregnancies and births**. Women may have more difficulty in conceiving subsequent babies, and have an increased chance of ectopic pregnancy.¹² There is an increased risk of potentially life-threatening placental problems such as; placenta previa (the placenta covering the cervix), placental abruption (premature placental separation), and placenta accreta (placenta implants into scar site).¹² In pregnancies following a caesarean women have higher rates of miscarriage and unexplained stillborn babies,¹³ and the risk of uterine scar separation, before or during labour.¹⁴ A woman's future birth choices may also be effected.

When necessary the benefits of caesarean birth far outweigh the risks. However, in Australia 30% of babies born each year are born via caesarean section,¹⁵ and the number is rising annually. This rate is 2-3 times higher than that recommended by the World Health Organisation of 10-15%,¹⁶ and has significant impact on the many women and babies who are unnecessarily being exposed to the risks of caesarean birth.

To be responsible for their own birth experience, it is important that women become informed of all their birthing options. By accessing information from a variety of health professionals; midwives, GPs, obstetricians, and complementary therapists, women and their partners can become empowered to make their birth choices according to their needs, with knowledge of the full range of options available.

Information can also be accessed through libraries, Pregnancy Resource Centres, Birthing Groups, the internet and other avenues, including services offered by the private and public health sectors.

Birthrites:Healing After Caesarean aims to provide information and support for women who have had or who may have a caesarean, and to increase the awareness of the issues surrounding caesarean birth within the community, and among healthcare providers.

We do this by providing telephone contacts, and facilitating monthly meetings, and via our library, website and quarterly magazine.

