Cesarean Birth Instructions

Before and after surgery

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When you and your health care provider decide it is best for your baby to be born by cesarean birth (also called c-section), a date for the surgery will be set up in advance. The following information will help you plan for the day before, day of and the recovery days following surgery.
Night before Surgery:
• **8 hours before surgery**: You may have only clear liquids that you can see through (no milk products or solid food).
• **2 hours before surgery**: You may **not** have anything to drink or eat.
• Daily medication (if approved by your provider) may be taken with a small sip of water.

Day of Surgery:
• Shower or bathe before coming to the hospital. Any surgery has a chance of infection because of the incision cut into the skin. You may help lower the chance of infection by bathing or showering before surgery. You may be asked to wash with a special soap before surgery.
• Brush your teeth but do not swallow any water.
• Do not wear any jewelry including your wedding ring, watch and piercings. Please leave all valuables at home.
• Do not wear makeup, lotions, powders, perfumes or hairsprays.
• You may wear your eyeglasses, but bring your eyeglass case. If you wear contact lenses, let us know since they may need to be removed before going into the operating room.
• Let your nurse know if you wear dentures or hearing aids. If so, bring your case for safe keeping when these are not in use.
• Bring a list of all medications, vitamins and herbal medicines or supplements that you take.
• If you use a CPAP machine for sleep apnea, bring it or the tubing as instructed. Know your machine settings.
• Bring a copy of your Advance Directive (Living Will and/or Power-of–Attorney for Healthcare) unless already given to us.
• If you are under 18 bring your parent or legal guardian. (The exception is Minnesota).
Morning of Surgery:
1. You will be taken to Labor and Delivery.
2. To prevent infections, your health care team will wash their hands before and after all cares. If you do not see us wash our hands before caring for you, please remind us! You and your family will be asked to do the same.
3. Your nurse will ask questions about your medical history. Your anesthesia team reviews this information since it may affect your anesthesia. Some medications, such as blood thinners or aspirin, can affect how much you bleed during surgery.
4. You will change into a hospital gown and robe.
5. To keep you safe, an identification band will be placed on your wrist. We will check the band and ask you to tell us your name and date of birth before all medication, tests, and procedures.
6. Your vital signs (temperature, heart rate, respirations, and blood pressure) will be taken. We will monitor your baby’s well-being by using a fetal monitor.
7. You will have an IV in your arm to give you fluids and medications during surgery and recovery.
8. Your belly and upper pubic hair may be shaved with an electric clipper.
10. Your doctor and anesthesiologist will meet with you prior to going to the operating room.
11. Your nurse will review with you what to expect before, during and after your surgery. If there is a delay in surgery, your nurse will keep you informed.
12. If your support person is going to the operating room with you, they will change into special clothes. They will join you after you have been given anesthesia.
13. You will go to the operating room either by walking, wheelchair, or cart.
14. You may use a camera or video camera to take pictures of your baby after delivery and once your baby is stable. We will let you know when it is OK to take pictures.
Anesthesia Care:
Your anesthesia care team includes a doctor (anesthesiologist) and a nurse anesthetist (CRNA) working as a team. They review your medical history, your medicines and ask about reactions you may have had in the past due to medicines or anesthesia. During surgery the anesthesia team will:
• Give you anesthesia medicine and other medicines.
• Watch all your vital signs like heart rate, breathing and blood pressure.

What is Anesthesia?
Anesthesia is a medication that keeps you comfortable during surgery. The anesthesia team will talk with you to decide which kind of medication is the best for you and your baby. These medications will help you relax, prevent pain and keep you comfortable during the surgery. Anesthesia can be spinal, epidural, or general depending on your individual needs.
The Operating Room (OR):

Please feel free to ask questions when you arrive in the OR and throughout your stay. Tell us ways we can make you more comfortable.

• The operating room team and your support person will wear hair covers and masks over their nose and mouth. Please ask us to speak louder if you have trouble understanding us through our masks.
• This room will be brightly lit.
• You will be asked to lie down on a narrow operating table and a safety strap will be used.
• We will provide you with blankets to keep you warm.
• Sticky patches will be placed on your chest and side to monitor your heart.
• A cuff will be placed on your arm to take your blood pressure.
• A small monitor will be placed on your finger to watch your oxygen level.
• Air-filled sleeves will be used to gently squeeze your lower legs to prevent blood clots.
• A small tube (catheter) will be placed to keep your bladder empty.
• You will be given an antibiotic through your IV.
• Your abdomen will be cleaned with a special solution to help prevent infections. Note that this may remain on your skin for a few days following your surgery.
• Oxygen may be given using a mask over your nose and mouth.
• Your baby’s heart rate will be monitored before surgery.
• Surgery usually takes 1 – 1½ hours.
• There will be a team of nurses and a Respiratory Therapist ready to care for your baby.
Care in the Recovery Room:

- You, your baby, and your support person will go to the recovery room.
- Oxygen may be given using a mask over your nose and mouth.
- If you received general anesthesia, you may have a mild sore throat from the tube that was placed in your throat during surgery.
- You will still have an IV in your hand or arm for fluids and medicine.
- You will wake up with a small tube (catheter) in your bladder to drain your urine. This catheter is usually removed the next day.
- If you feel sick to your stomach, ask for medication to help you feel better.
Care following Surgery:

- Take part in your healthcare planning.
- Rest and sleep.
- Walking and moving your legs will help to prevent blood clots, constipation and pneumonia.
- Drink plenty of water and eat healthy foods. Your diet will slowly move from liquids to solid foods. Eat small amounts of easy-to-digest foods. Foods high in fiber such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains will help you avoid constipation.
- The length of your hospital stay depends on your medical status as determined by your provider. The usual length of stay is 2 – 3 days after surgery.
- Do not lift anything heavier than your baby until your provider tells you otherwise.
- Avoid driving for at least 2 weeks and while you are taking narcotic medication.
- Return for doctor visits.
- Full recovery takes 4 – 6 weeks.
Pain:
• Pain will be addressed frequently. You will be asked to rate your pain on a scale of zero (no pain) to 10 (the worst pain). Our goal is to manage your pain at a level that is comfortable for you. Your pain may not fully go to a zero but we will help make it tolerable for you.
• Pain may be lessened by medication. Be sure your nurse knows what is working for you.
• Other options to help lessen your pain are:
  – Using ice/heat
  – Backrubs or massage
  – Listening to soothing music
  – Changing positions
  – Splinting your incision with a pillow
  – Relaxation techniques such as breathing techniques
  – Visualization by thinking of peaceful surroundings
  – Distractions, such as being with baby and family
  – Dimming the lights
  – Meditation or prayer

Incision care:
• It is very important that anyone touching your incision clean their hands before and after. Please remind them if they forget.
• Watch for signs of infection in your incision: red, swollen, painful or has drainage that smells bad.
• Pat your incision dry after showering.
• Hold a pillow against the incision when you get up from lying down or sitting and when you laugh or cough.
• Breastfeeding will be more comfortable using the football hold or side-lying position to avoid pressure on your incision.
After going home, call your provider if:

- You have a fever over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Your incision becomes red, swollen, painful or has drainage that smells bad.
- You have a red, tender area on your leg or arm as this could be a blood clot.
- Your pain medicine is not working for you (meaning you are not sleeping well or you are not able to be up and moving because of your pain.)
- You have side effects from your medicines such as an upset stomach, redness, rash or itching.
- You have any questions or concerns about your condition.
Thank you for choosing Sanford Health for the birth of your baby. We are committed to providing you a flawless birthing experience. We are highly skilled and are looking forward to caring for you.