

## Information for Patients

# Elective (planned) Caesarean Section

## Introduction

Having a baby is a hugely exciting time and we are looking forward to sharing it with you. It is very natural to have some anxieties surrounding the birth of your baby but we hope that this leaflet will help to alleviate some of your anxieties about your elective caesarean section by clearly explaining the steps that we take before and after your baby is born.

At Saint Mary's Hospital we are committed to providing you with excellent care. Our elective Caesarean Section service is a well-established programme that has been tailored for women in accordance with national guidance. With good care both before, during and after your operation, you should benefit from reduced risks of post-operative complications and an earlier return to normal activity. After reading this leaflet we hope that you will feel better prepared for your caesarean section and for the time after your delivery.

Remember, you and your baby will be well supported during this time. If there is anything that you are unsure about please speak with your midwife.

You will receive this information leaflet at your pre-operative visit, along with your pre-operative carbohydrate drinks and your pre-medications (tablets to take that reduce the acids in your stomach and make your anaesthetic safer). For additional information regarding your anaesthetic please refer to the Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association leaflet: 'Your anaesthetic for Caesarean section'.

This leaflet will now take you through your elective caesarean section journey step by step.

## On the evening before your surgery

- The evening before your surgery have a large meal high in carbohydrate e.g. pasta.
- At 10.00 pm take your pre-medications and have a snack.

## If your Caesarean section is booked for the morning:

- You can eat and drink normally up until 2.00 am on the morning of your operation.
- Do not chew gum or eat sweets after 2.00 am.
- Between 2.00 am and 6.00 am you may drink still plain water.

- At 6.00 am have 2 bottles of your pre-op drinks with your pre-medications.
- After 6.00 am you are to remain nil by mouth (do not eat or drink anything at all).
- You should have a shower at home on the morning of your operation. Use a body wash or soap and pay particular attention to your groin and belly button during washing. Please **do not** use creams or lotions on your abdomen after your shower.
- Please ensure you and your birth partner attend the Antenatal Assessment Unit (AAU) at Saint Mary's Hospital for 7.30 am. This department is situated on the second floor.

### If your Caesarean section is booked for the afternoon:

- It is important for you to have breakfast but you must finish eating by 6.00 am.
- You can eat and drink normally up until 6.00 am on the morning of your operation.
- Do not chew gum or eat sweets after 6.00 am.
- Between 6.00 am and 10.00 am you may drink still plain water.
- At 10.00 am have 2 bottles of your pre-op drinks with your pre-medications.
- After 10.00 am you are to remain nil by mouth (do not eat or drink anything at all).
- Please ensure you and your birth partner attend Ward 64 at Saint Mary's Hospital for 11.00 am. This ward is situated on the second floor.

### On arrival to the hospital on the day of your operation

You will be seen by an anaesthetist on the ward before your operation.

- Please ensure that you are not wearing any jewellery, make up, nail polish or fake nails (including shellac or acrylics) on admission.
- Please minimise the number of valuables you bring with you to the hospital.
- Remember to bring all of the following items into hospital with you on the day:
  1. A snack - you will be offered food and drink when you arrive in recovery after your operation. Please bring in a snack that you may feel like eating (for example a sandwich and cereal bar).
  2. Warm clothing - a dressing gown and slippers. Staying warm is really important because it reduces your risk of developing infections and other complications. Please tell staff if you feel cold.
  3. Maternity pads.
  4. If you are planning to bottle feed your baby, please bring starter packs of ready to feed milk as we do not have facilities to prepare feeds using powdered milk.
  5. Baby clothes.
  6. Nappies/cotton wool/baby wipes.

**For additional information please refer to our checklist 'What should I pack for coming into hospital'.**



## The operation

Your baby will be delivered through a cut across the lower part of your abdomen, just above the bikini line. In the UK most Caesarean sections are done using either a spinal or epidural anaesthetic. These involve an injection into the back so that you are numb. This is much safer than a general anaesthetic and because you remain awake, your birth partner can stay with you and you can be awake to see your baby. It takes around 5-10 minutes to deliver the baby, and the whole operation takes around 45-60 minutes.

## What to expect after your operation

- When your operation has finished you, your baby and your birth partner will be taken to the recovery area.
- Providing your operation has been straightforward, you will be offered food and drink in the recovery area. This is a great time to eat the snack that you brought in from home.
- After about an hour in recovery you, your baby and your birth partner will return to the elective caesarean section recovery ward.
- The urinary catheter (that was put in your bladder just before your operation) will be removed at 6.00 pm if your operation was in the morning and at midnight if your operation was in the afternoon.
- Within 6 hours after your operation you will be able to get up and walk around. You will probably feel a little wobbly on your feet initially but the midwifery staff will be there to support you. Getting up and out of bed is a very important step in your recovery. You are encouraged to have 3 short walks within 24 hours of your operation.
- To reduce your risk of developing blood clots, for the 7 days after your operation you will have a daily injection of medicine called Fragmin. You will be shown how to self-administer this injection by the midwives on the ward.
- Ensure you have adequate supplies of simple pain relieving medications at home as these are not provided on discharge from hospital. (Paracetamol 1g every 4-6 hours, no more than 8 tablets in a 24 hour period and Ibuprofen 400mg every 6-8 hours, not more than 6x200mg tablets in a 24 hour period.)
- When you leave hospital you will be given some medication to take home with you. You will receive a 7-day supply of Fragmin as described above and you will also receive a 5-day supply of Dihydrocodeine 30mg. This is a strong pain relieving medication that you can take up to four times per 24 hours. As your pain becomes less you should aim to stop this pain relieving medication first.

## Expected length of stay

- Providing all is well following your Caesarean section you will be discharged home the following day. (As per NICE guidelines 2011).
- Longer stays will be planned as required on an individual basis.

## Ward information

Visiting hours for your birth partner is from 10.00 am–10.00 pm.

- For other visitors the visiting times are from 3.00 pm–6.00 pm.
- Please do not have more than 2 adult visitors at one time, NOT including your birth partner. The baby's siblings are not included in this.
- Other children under the age of 16 are not allowed on the ward.
- Meals are served at your bedside between 6.00 am–8.00 am (breakfast); 12.15 pm (lunch); and 5.15 pm (dinner). Outside of these times, tea and toast is available for patients on request.
- Please note that there are no microwave/reheating facilities available on the ward for patients/visitors.
- Unfortunately, owing to infection control, flowers cannot be permitted on the ward. Please ensure your visitors are aware of this.

The contact number for Ward 64 ERP bay is **(0161) 701 0010** (24 hours).

## Managing expectations

As this is an elective operation there is a possibility your caesarean operation could be cancelled on the day due to unforeseen emergencies. Although cancellations are not frequent, if this does occur you will be given the next available date and time to return.

**If you have any questions about this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact us.**