



# GETTING READY FOR YOUR CESAREAN SECTION

## Get ready for surgery

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**Don't forget to set up your My Health at Vanderbilt account!**

Go to **MyHealthAtVanderbilt.com** to sign up.

You can use this secure, online site to see your test results,  
send messages to your providers, request medicine refills  
make appointments, and more.

# Things to do before surgery

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## Before my baby arrives

- I've found a provider for my baby. ▶ 2
- I have a car seat for my baby, so they can safely leave the hospital. ▶ 2
- I've talked to my providers about breastfeeding. ▶ 2
- I've learned about skin-to-skin contact and why it's important for me and my baby. ▶ 2
- I've decided what I'm going to do about birth control after my baby's born. ▶ 2
- I have a My Health at Vanderbilt account. ▶ [inside cover](#)

## One week before surgery

- I know what medicines to take or not take in the week before my surgery. ▶ 3

## One day before surgery

- I know what I can and can't eat or drink the day before my surgery. ▶ 3
- I know what medicines to take or not take on the day before my surgery. ▶ 3

## The night before surgery

- I received my cleansing wipes and know how to clean myself the night before my surgery. ▶ 4
- I have my Ensure Pre-Surgery Clear and know to drink a bottle after dinner before I go to bed. ▶ 5

## The day of surgery

- I know what medicines to take or not take on the day of surgery. ▶ 6
- If I have diabetes, I know what to do if my blood sugar is low the morning of surgery. ▶ 6
- I know what I can and can't eat or drink on the day of surgery. ▶ 6
- I have my Ensure Pre-Surgery Clear and know to drink a bottle before I leave for the hospital. ▶ 6
- I know what to bring and what not to bring to the hospital. ▶ 7

# Before your baby arrives

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It's time for you to plan for what you'll need for you, your baby, and your family after delivery.

## Choose a provider for your baby

Your baby will need a provider. Pick one before the birth. You can choose a pediatric provider or a family practitioner. Both have special training in the care of children. If you need help finding one, check our online directory at [VanderbiltHealth.com/main/findadoc](http://VanderbiltHealth.com/main/findadoc).

## Get a car seat

You'll need to have a car seat brought to the hospital before you're allowed to leave with your baby.

## Learn about breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is good for your baby. We'll talk with you about this and teach you the reasons why. We're here to help you decide what to do and to answer any questions you have about it. There's even a class you can join, called Breast is Best. It's offered monthly at our One Hundred Oaks location.

We're also here to help you breastfeed during the first hour after delivery if you choose this. We call this time the "golden hour."

## Learn about skin-to-skin contact

Skin-to-skin time is good for you and your baby. We'll talk with you about this. We'll also encourage you to do this after the birth.

## Make plans for birth control

Decide what you'll do for birth control after delivery. Temporary options are daily birth control pills, Depo Provera injections every 3 months, or long-acting birth control devices, such as an IUD or Nexplanon.

If you plan to seek a permanent contraception method—either bilateral tubal ligation (having your "tubes tied") or male vasectomy—talk with your provider.

# The week and day before surgery

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## The week before surgery

*Follow your doctor's directions about the medicines you need to stop taking*

If you haven't already done so, stop taking all over-the-counter blood thinning medicines and supplements. This includes:

- aspirin, ibuprofen, and other NSAIDs
- vitamin E
- Omega 3 and fish oils
- all non-prescription supplements.

If you take prescription blood thinners, your provider will talk to you about when to stop taking them. Common prescription blood thinners during pregnancy are:

- heparin (Calciparine)
- enoxaparin (Lovenox)
- clopidogrel (Plavix).

## The day before surgery

*Follow your doctor's directions about what you can eat and drink*

If your doctor has given you special instructions for what you can eat or drink before surgery, follow them. Otherwise, you may eat like normal the day before your surgery. Eat small meals to avoid heartburn. Drink plenty of water. Being well-hydrated can make it easier for us to put in your IV. And it will also help you feel better.

*Keep following your doctor's directions about your medicines*

- If you take insulin, or if you have an insulin pump, ask your doctor how you should take your insulin the day before your surgery.
- If you take blood thinners, be sure you've asked your doctor about taking them on the day before your surgery.

*We'll call you*

This will give us a chance to go over any final details about your surgery.

If you have any questions before this time, call us at (615) 343-5700. Or send us a message through My Health at Vanderbilt.

# The night before surgery

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## You'll use your cleansing wipes to clean your skin

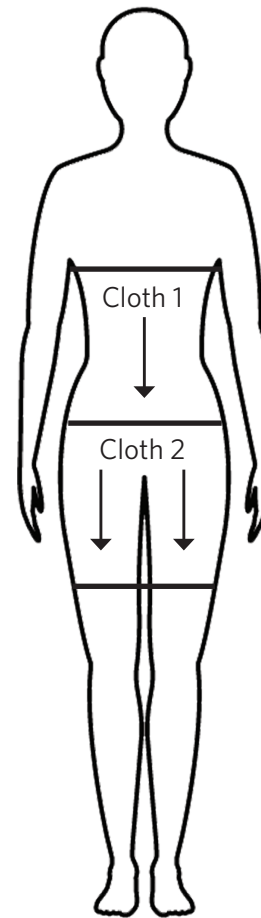
This will help prevent infection after surgery. Use the cleansing wipes that came with your other prep items. These wipes are pre-soaked with a cleaning solution (antiseptic) that will lower the number of germs on your skin. The package has 2 wipes in it. **If you didn't get these wipes, let us know right away.**

### Step 1

- Take a shower.
  - Wash your hair with shampoo.
  - Do not use conditioner on your hair.
  - Clean your entire body with soap and water.
- Dry off all the way. **Do not use any lotions, deodorant, powder, perfume, aftershave, cream, or other products on your skin.**
- Wait at least 1 hour. Your skin must be all the way dry before you use your wipes.

### Step 2

- Open the package of wipes.
- Using firm pressure, use the wipes in the this order:
  - Wipe 1: Wipe your belly starting from just under your breasts down to your pubic hair line.
  - Wipe 2: Wipe the area that starts at your pubic hair line, and continue down the top of your thighs halfway to your knees. **Do not wipe your labia or vagina with the cloths.**
- Let your skin air dry. Do not rinse off. Your skin may feel sticky while it dries, but this will go away.



*When you clean, start at your belly. In each area, start at the top then wipe down.*

# The night before surgery

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## You'll drink your first bottle of Ensure Pre-Surgery Clear

Ensure Pre-Surgery Clear will help improve your recovery after surgery.

- Drink 1 bottle (10 oz) after dinner, but before bedtime, the night before surgery. Any flavor is fine.
- You'll drink your second bottle in the morning.

### *If you're diabetic*

You'll drink the Ensure, but you need to talk with your provider about it first. You may need to adjust your insulin dose. Your provider will let you know.



*You'll drink 2 bottles before surgery—1 the night before, and the 2nd in the morning.*

# The day of surgery

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## Do not shower again

You do not need to take another shower before you come to the hospital. When you get here, we'll help you wipe down again before your surgery.

## Follow your doctor's directions about your medicines

Do what your doctor has told you about taking medicines on the morning of your surgery.

## If you're diabetic, and your blood sugar is low, treat it

You need to treat like you normally do. Or do what your doctor has told you. For example, you might take glucose tablets or gel or drink a small amount of clear apple juice.

If you do have to treat your low blood sugar, make sure you tell us! We may have to delay your surgery if we think there's a risk of food or drink getting into your lungs.

## Follow your doctor's directions about what to eat or drink

- If your doctor has given you directions about what you can eat or drink before surgery, follow them.
- If you didn't get any special directions, you may eat solid foods up to 8 hours before surgery.
- Drink clear liquids until 2 hours before surgery, even if you're at the hospital getting ready for surgery. Clear liquids are:
  - water
  - fruit juice without pulp (apple juice and grape juice are clear liquids; orange juice is not)
  - carbonated drinks
  - tea or coffee (no milk or cream)
  - a popsicle
  - sports drinks.
- Do not drink alcohol. It can interact with the medicines we give you at the hospital.

## Drink your second bottle of Ensure Pre-Surgery Clear

Drink it before you leave for the hospital. Again, if you're diabetic, be sure you've talked with your provider to see if you need to adjust your insulin dose.

### Remember!

- No food of any kind within 8 hours of your c-section.
- No liquids within 2 hours of your c-section.



# What to bring to the hospital

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## What to bring to the hospital

- A picture ID for when you check in.
- A copy of any advance directives you may have (*advance care plan, living will, appointment of health care agent, medical power of attorney*).
- A list of all the medicines you're taking. This includes supplements and over-the-counter and prescribed medicines.
- Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing for when you go home (*in the hospital you'll wear a hospital gown*).
- A few personal care items if you want (*things like a comb or brush, toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant/antiperspirant, dentures, hearing aids, etc.*)
- **If you have sleep apnea:** your c-pap or bi-pap mask and machine.

## What NOT to bring to the hospital

- Most of the time you should not bring any medicines to the hospital unless your doctor has told you to. However, if you take any specialty medicines or use inhalers, you may bring these with you. Ask your doctor if you have questions.
- Do NOT bring valuables like money, watches, or jewelry. In fact, you need to take off all jewelry and any body piercings so you don't get hurt during surgery.
- Do NOT bring too many belongings. Keep in mind that your support person will have to hold onto all of your things while you're in surgery.

# Before and during surgery

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## Getting to the hospital

Get here 2 hours before your scheduled surgery time.

- Go to the Labor and Delivery Department on the 4th Floor of VUMC. Check in at the nursing station.
- We'll take you back to your room when it's ready. One of our nurses will check you in.

## Before surgery

- You'll meet many people, including your delivery nurse and members from the anesthesia and delivery teams.
- You'll change out of your clothes and put on a hospital gown. You'll take off any wigs or hairpieces, dentures, contact lenses, jewelry, eyeglasses, and hearing aids. Your support person will hold these for you.
- We'll ask you to verify that you're not wearing jewelry, piercings, or contact lenses.
- You'll review and sign consents with a member of your delivery team.
- Your nurse will get a 20-minute reading of your baby's heartbeat.
- We'll put an intravenous (IV) line in your arm. This will allow us to give you the fluids and medicines that you need during your surgery.

- Your surgeon will talk with you about any last questions you might have. Other members of the surgery team will ask you certain questions (your name, date of birth, and the kind of surgery you're having) more than once. This is for your safety and to make sure everyone knows who you are and why you're here.
- Your anesthesiologist will talk with you about your plan for pain control during surgery. They may recommend a nerve block (numbing medicine put where the surgery will be) or an epidural (a tiny tube put in your back for a continuous flow of pain medicine). The anesthesiologist will talk with you about this in more detail.

## During surgery

- When it's time for your surgery, we'll take you to the operating room.
- Your support person will wait for the nurse to come tell them that everything is ready for them to join you.
- We'll put compression devices around your legs, which you'll have on during surgery. These help keep your blood flowing and help to prevent blood clots. Most of the time, we'll take these off as soon as you're able to get up and move around after surgery.
- The anesthesiologist will put regional anesthesia in your back. This will numb your body where the c-section will happen.

# After surgery

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## In the recovery room

After delivery, we'll take you to the recovery room, where we'll watch you closely for 1 to 2 hours. During this time, we'll encourage mom-baby bonding and skin-to-skin contact.

- You may feel some discomfort when the anesthesia begins to wear off. Tell us if you feel uncomfortable.
- You'll still have a catheter in your bladder. This was put in to drain urine during surgery. Most patients have their catheter taken out about 8 hours after surgery. But some patients will have the catheter longer.
- Your support person can be here with you in the recovery room. Or they can go to the nursery to be with your baby. Usually, your baby will be with you except for when the nurse takes them to the nursery for an evaluation. We do our best to get your baby back to you as quickly as we can.

## In your hospital room

After recovery, we'll take you to your room in the postpartum unit. You'll be here for the rest of your stay.

### *You'll get out of bed and move around*

Walking and moving is important for you to do after surgery. It will help you heal faster, get your bowels moving, and help lower your pain. It also helps lower your risk of having blood clots.

Our goal is to have you up and moving within 6 hours after surgery. After the first day, we'll expect you to walk around the unit 5 to 6 times a day.

Once you're up and moving around, we'll take your compression devices off.

### *Rooming-in*

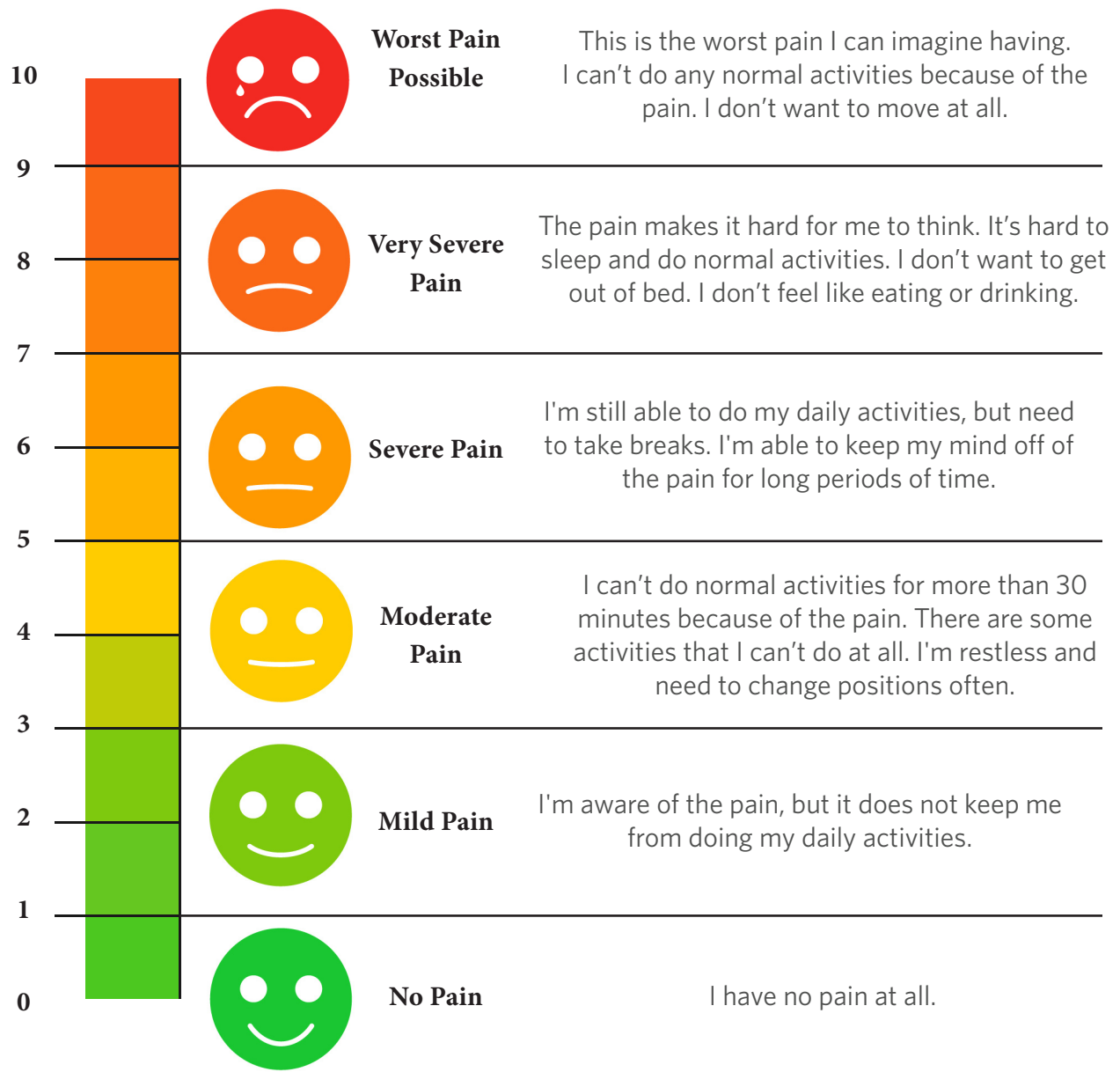
Your baby will be with you in your hospital room at all times—day and night. We call this rooming-in.

You'll go home when it's safe for you and your baby. Most women go home 2 days after surgery.

# We'll help you manage your pain

After surgery, you can expect to have some pain. But you should be able to walk, take deep breaths, eat, drink, and relax enough to fall asleep. **If pain keeps you from doing any of these things, let us know. We'll check on you often to see how you feel.**

We'll give you more than one type of medicine for your pain. We'll watch you closely to see how you respond to your medicines and to try to limit their side effects.



## When it's safe, you'll go home

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These are the goals you must meet before you go home

- Your surgery pain must be under control with medicine (you tell us it's a 4 or less).
- You're able to:
  - walk on your own
  - eat without throwing up
  - pee without a catheter
  - eat a regular diet.



# Your recovery

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## Manage your pain

Even after you've gone home, it's normal to have pain after surgery. It's part of the healing process. With time, the pain should lessen and go away.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and NSAIDs like ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve, and Advil are very good at helping pain after surgery.

- Only take NSAIDs if your doctor says it's safe, especially if you're taking a blood thinner.
- If you take acetaminophen (Tylenol), check to make sure that the other medicines you're taking do not have acetaminophen in them. Too much can harm your liver.
- When you leave the hospital, we may give you prescriptions for medicines to help you manage your pain while you recover. One of these prescriptions may be a temporary one for opioid (narcotic) medicine. Take only what is recommended to manage your pain.
- Certain kinds of pain medicine can make you constipated. Ask if you need some help with this.

## Care for your incision (wound)

- When you get home, you may take a shower. Let the water run softly over your incision and wash the area gently. Do not scrub it.
- Do not take a tub bath until you've gone to your postpartum visit and talked with your provider. This visit happens 6 weeks after your delivery.
- Usually, you have sutures that will dissolve on their own. You may also have skin staples. If you have staples, they are usually taken out about 7 to 10 days after surgery.
- It's normal for your incision to be a little red and uncomfortable for up to 2 weeks after surgery.

## Eat a healthy diet

Go back to your regular, healthy diet. You have no restrictions overall, but you should eat foods with protein to help your body heal.

## Drink plenty of fluids

Drink enough fluid to stay hydrated.

# Your recovery

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## Stay active, but within these guidelines

After you go home, there are some things you should do and some things you should NOT do.

### Do:

- Keep walking. Walk several times each day. Slowly add more distance until you reach your usual level of activity.
- Ask your surgeon when you can go back to work. This will depend on how well you're healing and the type of work you do.
- Ask your family and friends for help as needed with:
  - transportation
  - making meals
  - laundry
  - grocery shopping
  - house cleaning.

### Do NOT:

- Do NOT lift more than 10 pounds for 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Do NOT drive if you're taking any opioid (narcotic) pain medicine.
- Do NOT have sexual activity, use tampons, or put anything into your vagina for 6 weeks after surgery. You need to rest your pelvis during this time.



## Call us at (615) 343-5700 if:

- Your incision becomes warm and red, or if it starts to drain.
- You cannot drink fluids or keep them down.
- You have a fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C).
- You have pain that your pain medicine doesn't help, or you run out and think you may need more. (For any refills, you'll have to come in for an appointment first.)

For non-urgent questions, send us a message using your My Health at Vanderbilt account.

