
Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC)

Adapted from Pomegranate Midwives

Having a cesarean birth leaves a scar on the wall of the uterus. This area is weaker than the rest of the uterus. Because of this, it was once assumed that a pregnant person should always have a cesarean birth with any future births.

However, a large amount of research clearly shows that vaginal birth is a good option for many people who have previously had a cesarean birth. In most cases, a Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (called a VBAC) remains a safe option for both the pregnant person and the baby. Studies show that 70% to 80% of people who attempt VBAC will be successful at vaginal birth.

VBAC can still be an option after more than one cesarean birth, although the risks are slightly higher. A pregnant person's medical history or other circumstances may make VBAC a poor choice. In this case, their care provider will recommend a repeat cesarean birth.

If you have had a previous cesarean birth, talk to your care provider about whether you would be a good candidate for VBAC. You can also see the decision aid booklet for more information and to help you decide which choice you prefer.

Benefits of VBAC

The benefits of vaginal birth are particularly important for people who already have children at home. With VBAC, you can expect to spend less time in hospital and recover faster than you did with your cesarean birth.

Compared to a cesarean birth, VBAC offers:

- Less blood loss
- Less risk of injury and infection
- No complications associated with surgery
- A shorter hospital stay
- A faster, less painful recovery
- Less risk of breathing difficulties for your baby
- Reduced risk of complications for future pregnancies

Risks of VBAC

Compared to a planned cesarean birth, the risks of VBAC are:

Uterine rupture in labour (tearing of the uterus at the location of your cesarean scar). While the risk of uterine rupture is very small overall, this complication can be life-threatening for both the pregnant person and their baby. Research has determined that the risk is increased if your

babies are born close together: if you give birth vaginally 18 months or sooner after your previous cesarean, your risk of uterine rupture is slightly higher than if you give birth after 18 months.

Greater risks associated with having an unplanned cesarean birth, if you are not successful at delivering your baby vaginally for any reason.