

Specimen Caesarean Birthplan

It can make a big difference to a caesarean birth experience to think about what is important to you about birth and how you can keep some of those elements when a caesarean birth takes place. Caesareans are births, and like any birth there are often many ways that the event can be enhanced or personalised. Below is a listed of options that have been arranged by women when their babies have been born by caesarean. Everybody is different and we would be surprised if anyone felt all of the things appealed to them. This is given as a list of ideas to help you think about and plan for a really good birth experience.

For example:

- Women have had the screen removed so they can watch the operation, or have used a mirror to watch their baby being born, or have been helped to sit up a little so they can see their baby being born. We know of one woman who was helped by her surgeon to lift her baby out herself.
- You may want to make sure that the paediatric unit, resuscitation unit and weighing scales, where the baby is checked over at birth will be in theatre with you so that providing your baby is well (and most caesarean born babies are), he/she need never leave your sight or hearing.
- You can ask the midwife to give you a running commentary, and/or for music to be playing, or for quiet in theatre (particularly at the moment of birth). If you ask for quiet at the moment of birth then your voice can be the first voice your baby hears.
- You can ask for your baby to be delivered onto your chest, to discover your baby's sex for yourself rather than being told.
- You can ask to have photographs taken. Some people like photographs of the baby being lifted out of the incision (others don't!). You can also ask for one of the baby in the weighing scales - a good one because it shows the weight too.
- You can ask for the lights to be dimmed for a couple of minutes at the moment of birth. Babies are born with their eyes open so if the lights are dimmed and there is silence, yours can be the first face that comes into view and yours the first voice your baby hears.
- You can ask for your baby to be wrapped in a blanket and laid across your shoulder so you and your birth partner can 'baby gaze' while you are being sewn up - it's a wonderful distraction!
- You can delay having your baby washed, bathed or dressed until you are back on the maternity ward and have fed him or her for the first time.
- You can ask to be shown your placenta and have it explained to you by a midwife.

- If your baby is well there should be no reason why he/she should be separated from you in theatre or in the recovery room. Skin-to-skin contact should be facilitated and you should be helped to start to breastfeed when you want to.
- If you have a general anaesthetic you might want to give some thought to who should introduce your baby to you when you come around, and who (among family and friends) should be allowed to see your baby before you do if you are so unwell that meeting your baby is delayed.

This is based on normal practice in the UK where it is usual for the woman's birth partner to remain with her throughout the operation. We understand that in some hospitals it is the practice for the birth partner (usually the father) to leave theatre with the baby while the operation is completed. We feel such a policy should be challenged since women should not be left alone and unsupported at such an emotionally crucial time. In most cases the baby will be well and there are important reasons why the new family should not be separated, and why the normal process of bonding should be encouraged.

We would be very interested to hear other choices that women have made for their caesarean births and would like to be able to add more ideas to this list.

Gina Lowdon and Debbie Chippington Derrick, June 2004

Copied from: www.caesarean.org.uk