



Your VBAC RESOURCE

KEY INFORMATION FOR YOUR TRIAL OF LABOR AFTER
CESAREAN BIRTH

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HI THERE!

Congratulations on embarking on this remarkable pregnancy journey! Each step you take is filled with anticipation, excitement, and decisions that will shape your birth experience. We understand that considering a Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC) can feel daunting, as it involves weighing various factors and making informed choices that align with your personal and medical circumstances.

This guide is specifically designed to be your comprehensive resource, offering detailed information, unwavering support, and heartfelt encouragement to help you navigate this path. Opting for a VBAC not only promotes quicker recovery times compared to repeated cesareans but also offers a more natural birth process for many who are eligible and choose this option. It's about reclaiming your birthing experience, if that is your desire.

Our goal is to empower you with the knowledge and confidence you need to explore VBAC as a viable option. We believe that every birthing journey is unique, and you deserve all the resources necessary to make the best decision for you and your baby. By providing you with in-depth insights and understanding, we aim to alleviate any concerns and bolster your confidence throughout this process.

We are here with you every step of the way, ensuring that you feel supported and informed, empowering you in your choices, and celebrating the beautiful journey that lies ahead. Whether you pursue VBAC or make a different choice, our commitment is to support your path to a healthy and joyful birthing experience.

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VBAC DEFINED

VBAC stands for Vaginal Birth After Cesarean. It's the process of giving birth vaginally after having had a previous cesarean delivery.

VBAC, or Vaginal Birth After Cesarean, is a delivery option available for some women who have previously had a cesarean section (C-section) but wish to have a vaginal delivery in a subsequent pregnancy. This option can be appealing to those wanting to experience a vaginal birth, have a quicker recovery, and avoid another major surgery.

Here are some key points about VBAC:

1. Suitability: Not every woman who has had a C-section is a candidate for VBAC. Factors influencing this decision include the type of incision made during the previous C-section, the reason for the initial C-section, and the overall health of the mother and baby in the current pregnancy.

2. Benefits: VBAC can provide numerous benefits including a shorter recovery period, less postpartum pain, reduced risk of infection, and a lower chance of respiratory problems for the newborn compared to a repeat C-section.

3. Success Rates: The success rate for VBAC varies but can be as high as 60-80% for women who meet the criteria and do not have contraindications. Successful VBACs often involve close monitoring and support during the labor process.

4. Risks: While many women safely have a VBAC, there are potential risks, the most serious being uterine rupture, which is rare but requires immediate medical intervention. This is why VBACs are usually performed in fully-equipped hospitals that can provide swift emergency care if necessary.

5. Best Candidates: Ideal candidates for VBAC often include women who have had only one low transverse cesarean incision, have no contraindication for vaginal delivery, and have had previous vaginal births in the past.

6. Planning and Support: Choosing VBAC involves thorough discussions with healthcare providers to weigh the risks and benefits. It's crucial for women considering VBAC to work closely with their medical team, create a detailed birth plan, and ensure support is available during labor.

Ultimately, the decision to pursue a VBAC is personal and should be made in partnership with healthcare professionals who can provide guidance based on individual health circumstances and preferences. VBAC is about both safety and the mother's childbirth experience, offering a viable option for many women who desire a vaginal birth after experiencing a previous C-section.

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUITABILITY *VBAC*

This resource aims to provide clarity on VBAC suitability and encourage informed decision-making

1. Type of Uterine Incision:

- Low Transverse Incision: The most common type. It's horizontal and across the lower part of the uterus, generally more favorable for VBAC due to reduced risk of uterine rupture.
- Vertical or T-shaped Incision: Less common and associated with higher risks. Women with these incisions typically aren't considered suitable for VBAC due to increased likelihood of uterine rupture.

2. Reason for Prior C-Section:

- If the reason is not expected to recur (like placenta previa), VBAC might be viable.
- Recurring issues, such as small pelvis size or complications, may impede suitability.

3. Overall Maternal Health:

- A healthy pregnancy and absence of conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes can make VBAC more feasible.
- Women should have no condition that contraindicates vaginal delivery like certain pelvic abnormalities.

4. Previous Vaginal Delivery:

- A history of prior vaginal birth, either before or after the C-section, increases a woman's likelihood of successfully having a VBAC.

5. Interval Between Pregnancies:

- A longer interval between deliveries (ideally 18-24 months) is associated with better outcomes for VBAC, reducing the risk of complications.

6. Number of C-Sections:

- Generally, women with one previous C-section are more likely to be considered for VBAC. Multiple previous C-sections may increase risk and generally discourage attempt for a VBAC.

VBAC BENEFITS

VBAC offers a multitude of benefits ranging from reduced physical strain to enhanced emotional and mental well-being, making it a viable and beneficial option for many expecting individuals desiring a vaginal delivery after a cesarean section.

Physical Benefits:

1. Reduced Surgical Risks: By opting for a VBAC, individuals avoid the risks associated with major abdominal surgery, such as infections, blood clots, and excessive bleeding.

2. Shorter Recovery Time: Vaginal births generally come with quicker recovery periods, allowing new parents to resume daily activities and care for their newborn more swiftly.

3. Lower Risk of Respiratory Issues in Newborns: Babies born vaginally are less likely to experience respiratory distress since the birthing process helps expel fluids from the baby's lungs.

4. Decreased Pain and Discomfort: Avoiding a cesarean section means less postoperative pain and no incision healing, improving overall comfort during the postpartum period.

5. Reduced Likelihood of Future Cesareans: Successfully having a VBAC can pave the way for vaginal deliveries in future pregnancies, avoiding repeated cesarean surgeries and their cumulative risks.

6. Lower Rate of Complications in Future Pregnancies: Avoiding multiple cesareans decreases the risk of complications such as placenta previa and placenta accreta in future pregnancies.

Emotional Benefits:

1. Empowerment and Confidence: Successfully having a VBAC can boost confidence and offer a sense of accomplishment and empowerment, giving individuals more control over their birthing experience.

2. Enhanced Bonding with Newborn: With a shorter hospital stay and quicker recovery, individuals can engage in and enjoy more extensive early bonding experiences with their newborn.

3. Sense of Personal Achievement: Many individuals find fulfilling personal satisfaction in achieving a vaginal birth after overcoming a previous cesarean. This can have lasting positive emotional impacts.

VBAC MORE BENEFITS

"EMBRACING VBAC EMPOWERS WOMEN WITH CHOICE, FOSTERS FASTER RECOVERY, AND UNLOCKS THE NATURAL RHYTHMS OF BIRTH, ENHANCING BOTH HEALING AND JOY."

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Mental Benefits:

1. Reduction in Anxiety and Fear:

For some individuals, facing a major surgery can be anxiety-inducing. A successful VBAC can alleviate these fears, providing mental peace and comfort.

2. Increased Support and Education:

The decision to pursue a VBAC often involves comprehensive discussions with healthcare providers, leading to improved education and understanding, enhancing mental preparedness.

3. Enhanced Emotional Well-being:

Supporting a desire for a natural delivery often improves mental health outcomes and emotional well-being, reducing stress and fostering a more positive postpartum experience.

4. Decreased Postpartum Depression Risk:

Studies indicate a possible reduction in the risk of postpartum depression with successful VBACs, contributing to better mental health for the parent.

5. Strengthened Relationship with Healthcare Providers:

Building an open and supportive relationship with healthcare providers during a VBAC journey can reinforce trust and communication, crucial for overall mental health and satisfaction.

BENEFITS OF CHOOSING C-SECTION OVER A VBAC

While both options have their own set of advantages and considerations, there are certain circumstances where opting for a Cesarean section (C-section) can be the better choice compared to attempting a Vaginal Birth after Cesarean (VBaC). Here are some benefits of choosing a C-section over a VBaC:

1. **Controlled Environment:** One of the primary benefits of a C-section is that it allows for better control over the birthing process. This can be especially helpful in cases where there are concerns about the safety of the baby or the mother during labor.
2. **Reduced Risk of Uterine Rupture:** A major concern with attempting a VBaC is the risk of uterine rupture, where the scar from a previous C-section tears during labor. Opting for a planned C-section can eliminate this risk altogether.
3. **Convenience and Predictability:** C-sections are typically scheduled in advance, which can be beneficial for planning purposes. It allows the mother to prepare both physically and mentally for the birth, as well as make necessary arrangements for childcare and other responsibilities.
4. **Lower Risk of Complications:** While all surgical procedures carry some level of risk, C-sections are generally considered safe when performed by experienced healthcare professionals. In some cases, choosing a C-section may result in fewer risks and complications compared to attempting a VBaC.
5. **Less Stressful Labor Experience:** Labor can be a physically and emotionally demanding process, especially for mothers who have had a previous difficult birth experience. Opting for a C-section can help reduce the stress and anxiety associated with labor, leading to a more controlled and potentially less traumatic birth experience.
6. **Maternal Request:** Some mothers may simply prefer to have a C-section for personal reasons, such as fear of labor pain or concerns about pelvic floor damage. It's important for healthcare providers to respect a mother's autonomy and support her decision if she chooses to have a C-section.

While there are definite advantages to choosing a C-section over a VBaC in certain situations, it's essential for expectant mothers to discuss their options with their healthcare provider and weigh the pros and cons based on their individual circumstances. Ultimately, the decision should prioritize the safety and well-being of both the mother and the baby.

VBAC RISKS

When considering VBAC, it is crucial for women to discuss their individual health, medical history, and personal preferences with their healthcare provider. By doing so, they can weigh the potential benefits against the risks to make an informed decision about their childbirth plan. Hospitals are well-prepared to manage these risks, offering a supportive environment to ensure both maternal and fetal safety. By understanding these risks, expectant mothers can better prepare for what to expect during the VBAC process and feel empowered to make the best choice for their health and that of their baby.

Vaginal Birth after Cesarean (VBAC) offers numerous benefits for women seeking a natural birthing process after a previous cesarean delivery. However, as with any medical procedure, it is essential to understand the potential risks associated with VBAC. While many women safely have a VBAC, and it often provides a rewarding experience, certain risks exist that need to be carefully considered.

1. Uterine Rupture

The most serious risk associated with VBAC is uterine rupture. This rare but critical complication involves the tearing of the uterus along the scar line of the previous cesarean delivery. Although the incidence of uterine rupture is low, estimated at about 0.5% to 1%, it necessitates immediate medical intervention. A uterine rupture can lead to severe consequences, including hemorrhage, harm to the mother, and potentially, risks to the baby's health. This is why VBACs are usually performed in fully-equipped hospitals that can provide swift emergency care if necessary, including the ability to perform an emergency cesarean section.

2. Infection

While less common than uterine rupture, infection poses a risk during a VBAC. Any surgical procedure, including a cesarean, carries a risk of infection, and VBAC is no exception. If the labor does not progress as planned, or if a cesarean is again necessary, the likelihood of infection could increase due to potential prolonged labor or the need for surgical intervention.

3. Need for Emergency C-Section

A successful VBAC is not always guaranteed. The need to convert to an emergency cesarean section exists if complications arise during labor, such as fetal distress or labor failing to progress. The transition from a planned VBAC to an emergency cesarean may carry additional risks and emotional distress for the mother.

4. Placental Issues

In rare cases, women attempting a VBAC might experience placental issues such as placental abruption, where the placenta detaches from the uterine wall before delivery. This condition can pose significant risks to both the mother and baby, requiring immediate medical attention.

5. Other Maternal and Fetal Risks

Additional risks may include potential harm to subsequent pregnancies if complications occur, potential need for blood transfusion due to hemorrhage, or less commonly, hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE) in the baby, resulting from oxygen deprivation during delivery.

VBAC PLANNING AND SUPPORT

Planning and supporting a VBAC involves collaboration with healthcare providers, personal preparation, and a strong support system. By understanding the process and your options, you can increase the likelihood of a satisfying and healthy birthing experience.

Counseling and Decision-Making

1. Informed Discussion: Engage in comprehensive discussions with healthcare providers to understand the risks and benefits of VBAC versus elective repeat cesarean.

2. Medical Assessment: Review your obstetric history to determine eligibility for VBAC. Factors like type of uterine incision, overall health, and reason for the previous cesarean play a role.

3. Support System: Involve family members and other support persons in these discussions to build a strong support network.

Planning a VBAC

1. Select the Right Provider: Choose a healthcare provider and hospital experienced in managing VBACs and prepared to handle any potential complications.

2. Develop a Birth Plan: Draft a detailed birth plan that includes preferences for labor management, pain relief options, and emergency contingencies.

3. Monitor Health: Throughout pregnancy, regular health assessments like ultrasounds and check-ups are essential to ensure both maternal and fetal well-being.

4. Discuss Interventions: Have a clear understanding of medical interventions that may be necessary during labor, and discuss their implications with your healthcare provider.

Support During VBAC

1. Education and Resources: Attend prenatal classes focusing on VBAC to learn techniques for labor and delivery and to connect with other women with similar experiences.

2. Emotional Support: Emotional readiness is crucial. Counseling or joining support groups can provide reassurance and reduce anxiety.

3. Doulas and Midwives: Hiring a doula and having a midwife can provide additional support and advocacy during labor, contributing to a more positive experience.

In Labor

1. Monitoring: Continuous fetal monitoring will be recommended to ensure the baby's well-being during labor.

2. Pain Management: Consider your options for pain relief, whether medical (like epidurals) or natural (such as breathing techniques and massages).

3. Flexibility: Be prepared to adapt your birth plan if necessary. The safety of the mother and baby is the priority.

Considering VBaC or Repeat C-Section IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Making the decision between having a Vaginal Birth after Cesarean (VBaC) or opting for a repeat cesarean section is a deeply personal choice. To make an informed decision, it's crucial to consult with your healthcare provider. Here's a list of essential questions to guide your conversation:

Understanding the Risks and Benefits

1. What are the potential benefits and risks associated with VBaC and a repeat C-section?
 - Understanding the comparative risks can help you weigh your options.
2. What is my specific risk of uterine rupture if I choose VBaC?
 - This risk can vary based on individual factors and previous C-sections.

Personal Health and Medical History

3. How does my medical history affect my options for delivery?
 - Previous births, medical conditions, and the specifics of your prior C-sections are important.
4. Do you foresee any potential complications based on my current health status or pregnancy?
 - Personalized advice is essential.

Hospital and Provider Policies

5. What is your experience with VBaC deliveries, and what are your thoughts on it?
 - Understanding your provider's stance and experience can impact your decision.
6. Does this hospital support VBaC, and are there any specific policies in place?
 - Some hospitals may have restrictions or policies affecting your options.

Considering VBaC or Repeat C-Section

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Planning and Expectations

7. What kind of monitoring or special considerations would be necessary during a VBaC attempt?
 - Knowing the protocol can help you prepare mentally and physically.
8. What would the course of action be if complications arise during a VBaC attempt?
 - Clarifying emergency procedures is crucial for peace of mind.

Recovery and Postpartum Considerations

9. How might recovery differ between VBaC and a repeat C-section?
 - Understanding recovery times and support needs can help with planning postpartum.
10. What support systems should I have in place post-delivery, and does it differ between VBaC and C-section?
 - Knowing what to prepare for can ease the transition.

Lifestyle and Personal Preferences

11. How do my preferences for delivery align with the medical advice provided?
 - Your comfort and confidence in the decision are vital.
12. What postpartum support options (such as lactation consultants, counseling) are available here regardless of my delivery choice?
 - Support plays a big role in recovery and adjustment.

Informative Follow-Up

13. Can you provide resources or reading materials to help me better understand my options?
 - Credible resources can facilitate decision-making.
14. Can we schedule additional consultations or discussions as needed?
 - Knowing you can revisit your decision provides flexibility.

This guide can be a helpful starting point for discussions with your healthcare provider. Each pregnancy and situation is unique, and collaborating with your doctor to tailor these questions to your specific situation will ultimately help in making the most informed decision.

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