

■ Evelyn & Rose Women's Health

Assisted Birth (Vacuum and Forceps Delivery)

■ What Is an Assisted Birth?

An **assisted vaginal birth** is when your obstetrician uses **instruments such as a vacuum or forceps** to help guide your baby out during the final stage of labour. This is done only when necessary, to ensure a safe birth for both mother and baby. You will still be awake and involved throughout the process.

■■ When an Assisted Birth May Be Needed

An assisted birth may be recommended when:

- You have been pushing for a long time and your baby needs help to be born
- You are **exhausted** and unable to push effectively
- There are **signs of fetal distress** (changes in baby's heart rate)
- You have certain **medical conditions** where prolonged pushing is not advisable (e.g. heart disease, high blood pressure)
- Your baby's head is not rotating or descending as expected

■ Types of Assisted Birth

Vacuum (Ventouse) Delivery: A soft or rigid suction cup is gently placed on the baby's head and attached to a vacuum device. As you push with contractions, your doctor applies gentle traction to guide the baby out.

Forceps Delivery: Smooth, curved metal instruments (similar to large tongs) cradle the baby's head to assist with delivery during contractions. They are also used if the baby needs to be delivered more quickly.

■ Benefits of Assisted Birth

- Helps avoid a **caesarean section** when baby is close to being born
- Can **speed up delivery** if there are concerns for the baby's wellbeing
- May reduce **maternal exhaustion** and complications from prolonged labour
- Often enables a **vaginal birth** when progress has stalled

■■ Possible Risks and Side Effects

For the Mother:

- Temporary vaginal or perineal tears or bruising
- Soreness, swelling, or stitches needed after delivery
- Small risk of heavier bleeding or short-term bladder weakness

For the Baby:

- Minor swelling or bruising on the scalp (usually resolves in a few days)

- Slightly increased chance of jaundice (with vacuum)
- Rarely, more significant bruising or injury requiring observation

■ Pain Relief and Preparation

A **local anaesthetic** or **epidural** is usually given before the procedure. An **episiotomy** (small cut to the perineum) may be performed to help make space and reduce tearing. Your baby's wellbeing is closely monitored throughout.

■ After the Birth

- Your perineum will be checked and repaired if needed
- Pain relief, ice packs, and pelvic floor exercises help recovery
- Baby can usually have immediate **skin-to-skin contact**
- Most women recover well and can resume gentle activity soon after birth

■ Key Takeaway

Assisted birth is a safe, well-practised procedure designed to help your baby arrive safely when extra help is needed. Your obstetrician will always explain the reason, discuss your options, and ensure you feel informed and supported.

■ Evelyn & Rose Women's Health

■■■■■ Compassionate, evidence-based care for every stage of pregnancy and birth.

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