



## Enhanced recovery

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**This leaflet gives information on how we support your recovery following a Caesarean birth or if you needed to go to theatre following birth due to complications.**

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### What is enhanced recovery?

Enhanced recovery is an evidence-based approach to help people recover quickly from surgery, by ensuring

- You are as healthy as possible before your Caesarean.
- You receive the best possible care during your operation.
- You receive the best possible care while you are recovering.

Having an operation can be both physically and emotionally stressful. Enhanced recovery programmes try to get you back to full health as quickly as possible.

### Benefits of enhanced recovery

- Helps to get you back to full health as quickly as possible. Research has shown that the practices of enhanced recovery, including getting out of bed and start walking, eating and drinking sooner after an operation, the shorter recovery will be.
- Reduced risk of hospital acquired infections.
- Reduced risk of developing blood clots.

Most women are suitable for enhanced recovery. However, there are some occasions and medical complications where the obstetrician (doctor specialising in pregnancy and birth) and anaesthetist may not feel it is suitable. If this is the case, it will be explained to you.

By following the advice detailed in this leaflet, it is expected that you can be discharged home within 24-36 hours of your operation, provided there are no other clinical needs for yourself or your baby/babies.

### You can expect us to:

- Help make sure you leave the hospital as soon as you are ready.
- Ensure you have a plan in place for postnatal care.
- Do our best to make sure your stay in the hospital is as comfortable as possible.

If a longer hospital stay is recommended, we will discuss this with you, and you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

If you have further questions and concerns, please speak with your midwife.

## Antenatal enhanced recovery – preparing for birth

### If you are having a planned Caesarean birth:

To enhance recovery from surgery, it is important that you play an active role in your own care:

- Eat well in the weeks leading up to your operation. Your body will need energy for repair. Eat food high in protein, such as meat, eggs, dairy, almonds and lentils. Eat food high in carbohydrates, such as bread, noodles, pasta, crackers, cereals and rice. Also eat fruit, such as apples, bananas, berries, mangoes, melons and oranges.
- Exercise – being physically active before your operation will help you recover quicker, even if you do gentle exercise.
- Relaxation – adequate rest is important to prepare for recovery and to enable you to care for your baby.
- Smoking – giving up or cutting down cigarettes will help speed up your recovery and reduce your risk of developing complications.

### Items to buy and bring with you on the day of your Caesarean that will support your recovery:

- **A sports energy drink:** A sports drink is an isotonic energy drink containing carbohydrate and electrolytes to help ensure you are properly hydrated before your operation. You will need one that ideally provides 28 calories in every 100mls (28 Kcal/100mls) and that is non-fizzy. The midwives will advise you when to drink this prior to your operation. **IF YOU HAVE DIABETES or BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH GESTATIONAL DIABETES, YOU WILL NOT REQUIRE THIS**, as it will affect your blood sugar levels.
- **Packet of peppermint chewing gum:** This is to chew in recovery after your operation as it helps stimulate digestion and prepares your body for food.
- **Paracetamol and ibuprofen** for the postnatal period for use at home.

## Postnatal enhanced recovery – how you will be supported after the birth

Once your baby/babies have been born and the operation is complete, you will be moved with your baby/babies to the Recovery area or Delivery Suite for further close monitoring of your observations. This will include blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and respirations. They will also check your dressing over your caesarean wound and your sanitary pad to ensure bleeding is not heavy.

### Food and drink

In Recovery / Delivery Suite, you will have fluids going into your cannula to hydrate you.

You will be encouraged to take small sips of water when you feel able.

Once the midwife / nurse is happy that you can tolerate water, the fluids can then be stopped.

You can chew a stick of the peppermint gum to help stimulate your digestive system.

If you feel sick at all, please inform your midwife / nurse. They will be able to give you anti-sickness medication.

You will be transferred to the postnatal ward once the midwife / nurse is happy with your observations; this normally is in the first three hours following birth. On the postnatal ward, you will be offered a snack box or a light snack. You should aim to be eating normally by 6-12 hours after the birth.

Try to eat meals containing protein - such as meat, cheese, milk, and fish - to aid in healing. We also encourage you to eat fruit and vegetables, a high-fibre diet to prevent constipation, one of the expected side effects after surgery.

## Monitoring

Your midwife / nurse on the postnatal ward will carry out regular observations as clinically needed. This will include blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and respirations. They will also check your dressing over your caesarean wound and your sanitary pad to ensure bleeding is not heavy. Any concerns will be escalated to the doctors as required. The midwife / nurse will support you with changing pads while you are not able to mobilise.

## Pain relief

You will be offered regular pain relief in the postnatal wards. If you experience pain, please let the midwife know by pressing the call bell. Pain relief will help you to mobilise which will enhance your recovery and reduce the risk of other problems like developing blood clots. We usually give three analgesics (painkillers) together. Dihydrocodeine is the strongest painkiller of the three but it is expected to pass through your breastmilk in small amounts so we will need to observe your baby. We also offer Ibuprofen, a painkiller and anti-inflammatory medication. The third painkiller is Paracetamol, which is the safest of the three. We will encourage you to take the three painkillers every 6 hours while you are still recovering. The midwife / nurse will complete regular drug rounds to give out medications. If you require pain relief in between the drug rounds, please press the call bell to ask.

The reason for early mobilisation is to help prevent complications such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and to improve bowel function.

## Going home

The enhanced recovery programme aims to have you fit and well enough to go home the day after your Caesarean. We aim for an afternoon discharge to ensure you, and your baby / babies have had all the necessary checks.

Sometimes, due to other health issues or complications for you or your baby / babies, it is not possible to go home the next day, and you will be advised to stay in hospital. The midwives and doctors on the ward will discuss this with you.

It is also important to ensure that you feel confident in feeding your baby / babies before going home following advice and support from the ward maternity staff.

Prior to discharge, the midwives will provide you with information on how to look after yourself and baby / babies at home. The community midwife will visit you at home the day after you leave hospital. Call the **24/7** telephone number **0118 322 7304** if you have any concerns regarding yourself or your baby / babies.

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT Maternity, S Bailey, Head of Midwifery/ D Ongaya, ANC and Neonatal BCG Nurse, May 2025  
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