

A cesarean birth is the surgical delivery of a baby through an incision in the mother's belly and uterus. Cesarean births are done if a vaginal birth is impossible or unsafe for you or your baby.

Reasons for an Unplanned Cesarean Birth

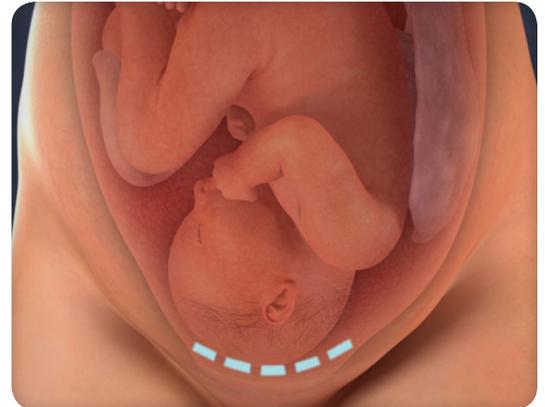
Unplanned cesareans are performed when they become necessary during labor. Here are a few reasons:

- When the baby's head doesn't fit through the pelvis (it's common for labor to slow down, and pushing may take longer and not be effective)
- Your baby has an abnormal heart rate
- Labor isn't progressing

Reasons for an Emergency Cesarean Birth

An immediate emergency cesarean only happens in about 1% of all births. In the case of an emergency, general anesthesia is usually used—this means you are asleep for the birth. Usually support people are not brought into the operating room during these emergency cesarean births. Here are some reasons emergency cesareans are performed:

- A placental abruption, which is when the placenta separates from the uterus wall before the baby is born, causing severe bleeding
- Cord prolapse, which is when the baby's head is still high and the umbilical cord slips through the dilated cervix—the cord can get pinched and block the flow of oxygen to the baby
- Uterine rupture, which is a tear in the wall of the uterus that can cause dangerous bleeding for Mom and distress (abnormal heart rate) to the baby



The cesarean incision is just above the pubic hair



This mother holds her baby skin to skin as her surgery is being completed



Quiz

1. **When the baby's head doesn't fit through the pelvis, this type of cesarean will be performed.**
 - A. Planned
 - B. Unplanned
 - C. Emergency
 - D. None of the above

2. **One reason that an emergency cesarean occurs is when:**
 - A. The placenta separates from the uterus
 - B. Mom is tired
 - C. The doctor plans it ahead of time
 - D. None of the above

3. **Some risks of cesarean birth to the mother include:**
 - A. An infection at the incision site or an internal infection
 - B. Increased blood loss or hemorrhage, blood clots in the legs
 - C. Injuries to organs, and increased risk of future cesareans
 - D. All of the above

4. **What are some things that will be done to prepare you for a cesarean surgery?**
 - A. Signing consent forms and getting an IV
 - B. Your partner will be asked to put on scrubs
 - C. Anesthesia is administered or boosted
 - D. All of the above

5. **After a cesarean birth, babies benefit from being held skin to skin as soon as possible because:**
 - A. It helps stabilize the baby's heart rate, body temperature, and blood sugar
 - B. It wakes the baby up
 - C. It keeps them from getting bored
 - D. None of the above

Reducing the Cesarean Risk

Studies indicate that some cesareans are avoidable.

How to lower your risk

- Avoid gaining more than the recommended amount of weight.
- Have continuous, hands-on support throughout labor. Consider hiring a doula, who can suggest the most useful comfort strategies.
- Avoid inducing labor unless medically necessary.
- Stay at home during early labor.
- Use upright or forward-leaning positions during labor and pushing.
- If you opt for an epidural, wait until labor is well established before getting it.