

Cesarean Recovery

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

It is important to get up and moving as soon as you can safely, as early as the day after your cesarean. Try to remain as upright as possible when walking and avoid hunching over. Hug a pillow to brace your abdomen when you get in and out of bed, up from a chair, cough, laugh or sneeze. Remember to exhale with transitional movements. Watch for signs of dehiscence (incision splitting), swelling, and pain at the incision. If this occurs, contact your medical provider immediately. Remember to message your physical therapist to schedule your first postpartum visit at 2 weeks.

SCAR MANAGEMENT

Proper scar management is important to facilitate healing. It will help to prevent excessive scar tissue adhesions and restrictions from developing that may otherwise lead to range of motion and strength limitations, as well as chronic pain. **Be sure to follow the care instructions provided by your obstetrician and/or nurses in the hospital.** It is important to keep the incision clean and dry to prevent infection. If the wound becomes infected, this will delay healing and result in more scar tissue.

During the first few weeks, you can gently massage the skin a few inches from the incision to help facilitate blood flow to the area and promote healing. **Once the scar is fully healed (usually around 6 weeks) you can begin massaging the scar directly.** This will help to prevent the scar from adhering to underlying muscles. The goal is for the scar to move freely with the rest of your skin. **The more you massage it, the smoother, flatter, thinner, and less painful it will become.** For the greatest benefit, scar massage should be performed 2-3 times a day for 5-10 minutes at a time. If there are no restrictions, you do not need to perform it as often. Your physical therapist can show you specific techniques and recommend how often to massage your scar to maintain mobility. You will want to continue massaging your scar until it becomes mature, which can take anywhere from 6 months to 2 years. A mature scar is a white or pink color that is paler than your skin. **Scar massage is most effective in the first 2 years after surgery, but it is never too late to massage your scar.**

If you are sensitive to clothes rubbing against your scar or find it painful to touch the area around your scar, you may benefit from performing **desensitization techniques** on a daily basis. To do this, gently tap and rub the sensitive areas with soft materials such as a cotton ball or silk. As your tolerance to touch improves, progress to rougher materials such as a cotton shirt, bath towel, paper towel, soft Velcro, and corduroy. Gradually increase pressure as tolerated. Do this 2-3 times per day for 5-10 minutes.

[Silicone scar sheets](#) help to keep the scar properly hydrated, decrease excess collagen deposition, protect against external shear forces, and reduce inflammation. By optimizing the healing environment, they may help to improve scar hyperpigmentation, height and pliability.

Once the incision is fully healed, begin wearing the sheet for 4 hours a day, adding one hour per day until you have reached 12 hours. Best results are achieved when used for 2-3 months.

ABDOMINAL BINDERS AND SUPPORT GARMENTS

The use of abdominal binders and other support garments provide comfortable support while you are healing and enable you to return to your daily activities sooner. **Abdominal binders should fit like a gentle hug.** If it is too tight, it may put too much downward pressure on the pelvic floor, which we want to avoid. **We often recommend an early transition to less rigid support garments** that are more flexible and allow you to move more freely while still providing gentle compression, such as high waisted leggings. The use of abdominal binders and other support garments alone, are not enough to heal your core and regain strength. It is very important to perform core and pelvic floor exercises as well.