

Reasons for a Cesarean Birth

Cesarean births can be planned. But in most cases, a cesarean is not expected. A cesarean may be needed because of concerns about the baby, the mother, or the baby's passage through the birth canal. Listed below are some of the reasons you may have a cesarean.



Poor fit



Wrong position



**More than one
baby**

- **A poor fit.** The baby's head is poorly positioned or too large, which may prevent the baby from fitting through the birth canal. This is known as cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD).
- **A baby in distress.** The baby shows signs that he or she may not be able to stay healthy through the stresses of labor.
- **Labor fails to progress.** The cervix does not efface (thin) and dilate (open) enough. As a result, the baby cannot descend into the birth canal.
- **The wrong position.** The baby is in a breech position, with feet or buttocks descending first. Or the baby is lying sideways across the pelvis.
- **More than one baby.** With two or more babies, one is likely to be in the wrong position.
- **Problems with the placenta.** In some cases, the placenta (the organ that nourishes the baby) is between the baby's head and the birth canal (placenta previa). Or the placenta is pulling away from the uterus (placental abruption). Either makes vaginal birth risky.
- **Maternal health problems.** An ongoing health problem or one that arises during pregnancy can make a vaginal birth risky. Such health problems include diabetes, kidney disease, high blood pressure, and uterine fibroids.
- **A baby with special needs.** A health problem or birth defect can make labor or vaginal birth risky.
- **An active vaginal infection.** Herpes and other infections could infect the baby during the passage through the birth canal.