

Patient Reference Guide

Vaginal Birth After Caesarean

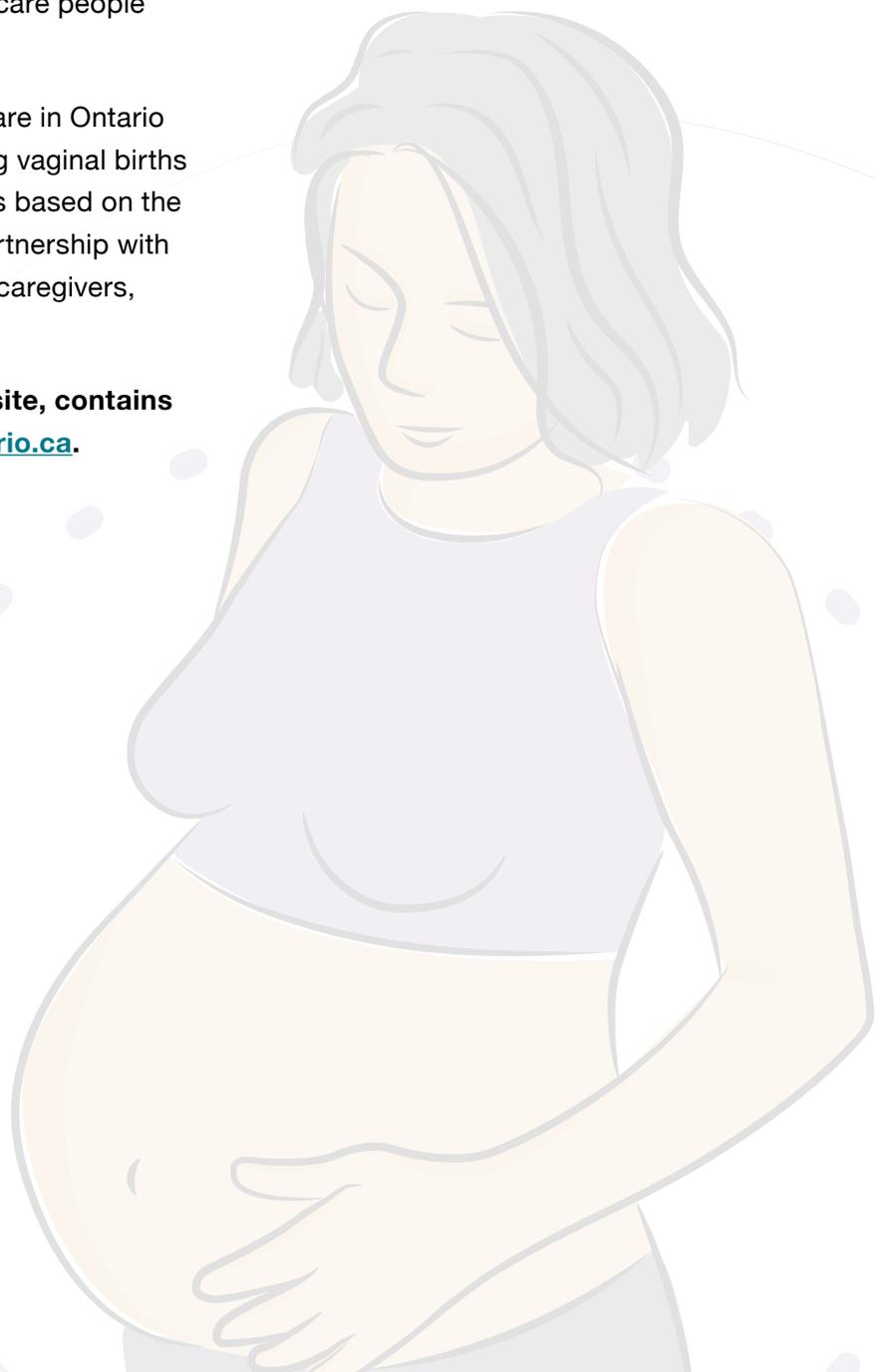
Care for People Who Have
Had a Caesarean Birth and
Are Planning Their Next Birth



Quality standards outline what high-quality care looks like. They focus on conditions or topics where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care people should receive.

This guide addresses variations and gaps in care in Ontario that need attention when it comes to managing vaginal births in people who have had a Caesarean birth. It is based on the best available evidence and was created in partnership with people who have had a Caesarean birth, their caregivers, and health care professionals.

The quality standard, available on our website, contains more information. You can find it at [hqontario.ca](https://www.hqontario.ca).



This guide is for people who have had a Caesarean birth and are planning their next birth. It can help you know what to ask for when receiving treatment and to make sure you receive the highest-quality care.

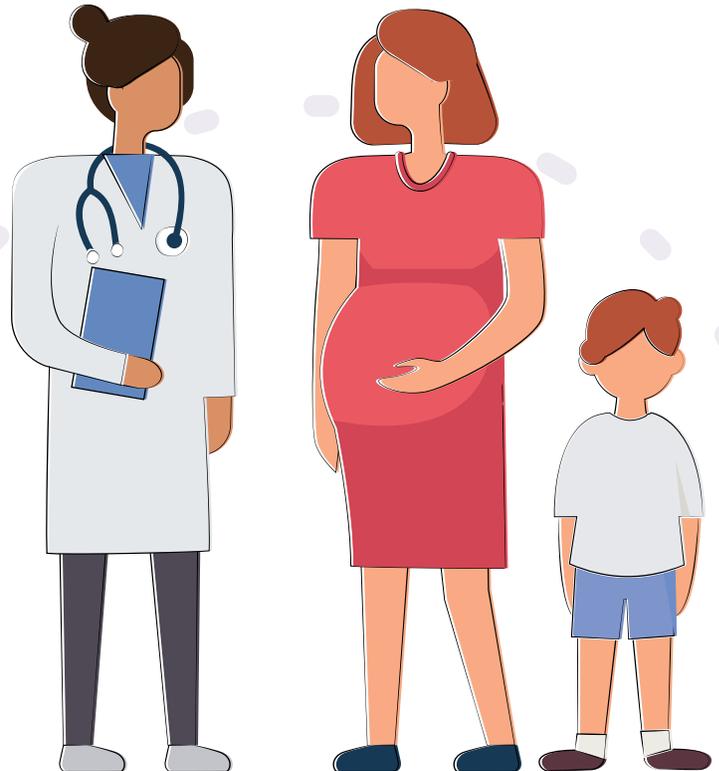
A Caesarean section is a surgery used to deliver a child through the abdomen.

If you have given birth by Caesarean and are planning your next birth ...

You can use this guide to help you and your physician or midwife develop a care plan that works for you, including access to culturally appropriate care. Use this information to ask informed questions and learn more about what types of care can help.

Care plans can be very different for each person, so it is important to work closely with your health care professionals.

Here are some things to consider.



Understanding and Planning Your Care

After Your Caesarean Birth

- Before you leave the hospital, your physician or midwife should talk with you about why you had a Caesarean birth and what your options are for future births. They should also talk about this at your 6-week follow-up appointment.
- Your physician or midwife should give you a written report that includes:

- Why you had a Caesarean birth
- How many weeks pregnant you were
- Any interventions or problems you had during labour, or if there were problems with your baby's position or heart rate
- What kind of scar is on your uterus
- Any reason(s) why you should not have a vaginal birth in the future

During Your Next Pregnancy

- You can plan a vaginal birth in this pregnancy, as long as there is no medical reason not to have one.
- If you have had a vaginal birth before, you are very likely to have a successful vaginal birth after Caesarean, as long as there are no medical reasons to avoid one in this pregnancy.
- When you are choosing how you want to give birth, you and your physician or midwife should work together to make decisions. Conversations should include what is important to you about your birth experience, and the benefits and possible harms of both vaginal birth after Caesarean and a planned repeat Caesarean section.
- In preparation for that discussion, your physician or midwife should read the report from your previous Caesarean birth.



- If your physician or midwife doesn't know the type of scar on your uterus from your previous Caesarean birth, they should help determine whether a vaginal birth after Caesarean is right for you.
- If you choose to plan a vaginal birth after Caesarean, your physician or midwife should tell you about the expertise available and not available where you plan to give birth, and what would happen if you need an unplanned Caesarean birth. If you're planning to have a vaginal birth after Caesarean, the safest place to have it is in hospital.

During Labour and Birth

- If you plan to have another Caesarean birth but you go into labour before your scheduled Caesarean, it may still be possible to have a vaginal birth. Talk to your physician or midwife about your options if you go into labour early.
- You may be offered drugs or other methods to speed up your labour if you need it. Be sure to talk with your physician or midwife about the benefits and potential harms of what they recommend.
- While you are in labour, your health care professionals should watch you closely for signs and symptoms of a tear in your uterus.



Everybody is different, and some options may not apply in your situation. If you have questions about your care, it is important to speak with your health care professional.

Looking for More Information?

Please contact us at qualitystandards@hqontario.ca or **1-866-623-6868** if you have any questions or feedback about this patient reference guide.

The quality standard, available on our website, contains more information. You can find it at hqontario.ca.

About Health Quality Ontario

Health Quality Ontario is the provincial advisor on the quality of health care. We are motivated by a single-minded purpose: **Better health for all Ontarians.**

Our quality standards are concise sets of statements outlining what quality care looks like for conditions or topics where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive. They are based on the best available evidence and are developed in collaboration with clinical experts from across the province, and patients and caregivers with lived experience with the topic being discussed.

For more information about Health Quality Ontario and our quality standards, visit: hqontario.ca.

About the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health

The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health has two distinct roles. First, the council generates information to support the evolving needs of the maternal-child health care system in Ontario. Second, it is a resource to the maternal-child health care system in Ontario to support system improvement and to influence how services are delivered across all levels of care.