

Complementary therapies & Caesarean



Most mums have a normal labour & vaginal delivery, but sometimes problems arise & the baby has to be delivered quickly, either because he's in distress or has difficulty negotiating the birth canal, or because you're unwell before or during labour. The current UK Caesarean section rate is almost 25% - so there's a 1:4 chance you may need one - but it's a major operation which shouldn't be done without a definite medical reason. Immediately before the operation, practise deep breathing exercises to keep you calm, as well as after the birth, to prevent chest infections. Gently circling your ankles promotes good circulation. Don't forget your pelvic floor exercises – even with a CS!

If your Caesarean is planned you can still use complementary therapies. Bach Rescue Remedy, 4 drops neat on your tongue eases anxiety & panic. It's safe to take even though you're not allowed to eat or drink & it *won't* interfere with any drugs, but **do inform your anaesthetist**. If an emergency Caesarean is needed during labour, try other Bach remedies, 2 drops neat on your tongue. For fear, use mimulus, for reassurance use cerato & if you're terrified use rock rose. Afterwards, walnut helps you adapt to change, olive is good for tiredness & use willow if you resent having had the Caesarean. If it was an emergency Star of Bethlehem combats the sense of shock.

Have regular massage & aromatherapy in the last weeks before a planned Caesarean & afterwards, or use 4 drops of oil in your bath - orange & mandarin are uplifting, ylang ylang, frankincense & lavender are relaxing but avoid any oils which may trigger labour eg clary sage & jasmine. Once you've had your baby add lavender & tea tree to your bath for relaxation, pain relief & to prevent infection. Reflexology to encourage contractions *should not* be done if you're having a planned Caesarean but reflexology can ease pain, aid relaxation & encourage bowel movements after the birth. Acupressure wrist bands relieve sickness after the operation – take them into hospital with you.

If you're having a planned Caesarean STOP all herbal medicines 2 weeks before to avoid risks of interacting with other drugs. Do NOT take raspberry leaf tea in pregnancy. After the operation, calendula or chamomile cream aids wound healing, but don't use St John's wort herbal tablets for healing if you're breastfeeding. Homeopathic arnica helps bruising & shock & hypericum aids healing. Use arnica 30C & hypericum 30C tablets every hour on day 1; every 2 hrs on day 2; and every 3 hrs on day 3, then stop. Arnica also comes as a cream but don't put it directly on the Caesarean wound.

Always inform your midwife, obstetrician & anaesthetist if you wish to use natural remedies before, during or after a Caesarean; avoid all herbal remedies unless advised by a qualified practitioner.

Leaflet written by Denise Tiran, Expectancy's Director, and intended as a general guide only