



# Preparing for your planned Cesarean section (C-section)

A guide for patients and care partners

## **Disclaimer**

This patient education resource is not medical advice. It shares common health facts, advice and tips. Some of the information provided in this resource may not apply to you. Please talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care team member to see if this information will work for you. They can also answer any questions or concerns that you might have.

**CP18D (03/2024)**

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# Purpose of this guide

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This guide will help you prepare for your planned Cesarean section (C-section). Please read this information at least one week before your scheduled C-section and again the evening before.

## Important phone numbers and directions



### Obstetrical Assessment Unit (Triage)

If you think you are in labour, or if you have questions or concerns about your pregnancy, call the triage unit of the campus where your C-section will be. Nurses are available 24 hours a day to answer your questions.

- General Campus: 613-737-8012
- Civic Campus: 613-761-5112

### Birthing Unit

- General Campus: Address: 501 Smyth Rd, Ottawa, ON. 8th floor. Use the main elevator.
- Civic Campus: Address: 1053 Carling Ave, Ottawa, ON. 4th floor. Use elevator “D.”

**Monarch Centre:** The Monarch Centre is a clinic that you and your baby may visit once you are discharged from the hospital. Your nurse will give you information about the Monarch clinic before you leave the hospital.

- **Monarch Clinic - West end location:** 613-627-0795
  - » Address: 152 Cleopatra Dr., Suite 108, Ottawa, ON K2G 5X2
- **Monarch Clinic - Southeast location:** 613-691-2578
  - » Address: 1355 Bank Street, Suite 104, Ottawa, ON K1H 8K7



If you have any urgent problems, contact your obstetrician, midwife or family doctor, or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

For non-urgent concerns, call Health Connect Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

## Getting ready for your planned c-section

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### One week before your C-section

- ✘ **Do not** shave, clip, or wax your abdomen (stomach), pubic area (vulva), or upper thighs starting 7 days before your C-section.
- ✓ Buy 2 Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG) soaked sponges at least 3 days before your scheduled C-section. You can buy them at The Ottawa Hospital Pharmacy (General Campus: 613-731-9152, Civic Campus: 613-761-4157) or at a medical supply store. You will need to use these to wash yourself on the evening before and the day of your C-section (see the instructions for how to wash with CHG sponges on page 5).
  - » These sponges have a special kind of soap in them that is stronger than ordinary soap and will help kill any germs on your body that could make you sick after your C-section.
  - » If you are allergic to chlorhexidine, talk to your surgeon before buying CHG soaked sponges.
  - » Each sponge costs about \$10. They are not always in stock, so **please try to get them ahead of time.**
- ✓ Pack a bag to bring with you to your planned C-section appointment.

## What to bring to the hospital

- Your health card (i.e.: OHIP) and any other insurance information.
- Necessary medical devices (i.e., sleep apnea machine, inhalers for asthma, Medic Alert bracelet, dentures, glasses, contact lenses, hearing aids, assistive mobility devices such as walker or cane, etc).
- Medications you are taking (in their original prescription bottle or container).
- Containers with your name on them in case you need to remove small items (i.e.: hearing aids) for surgery.

You can also choose to bring:

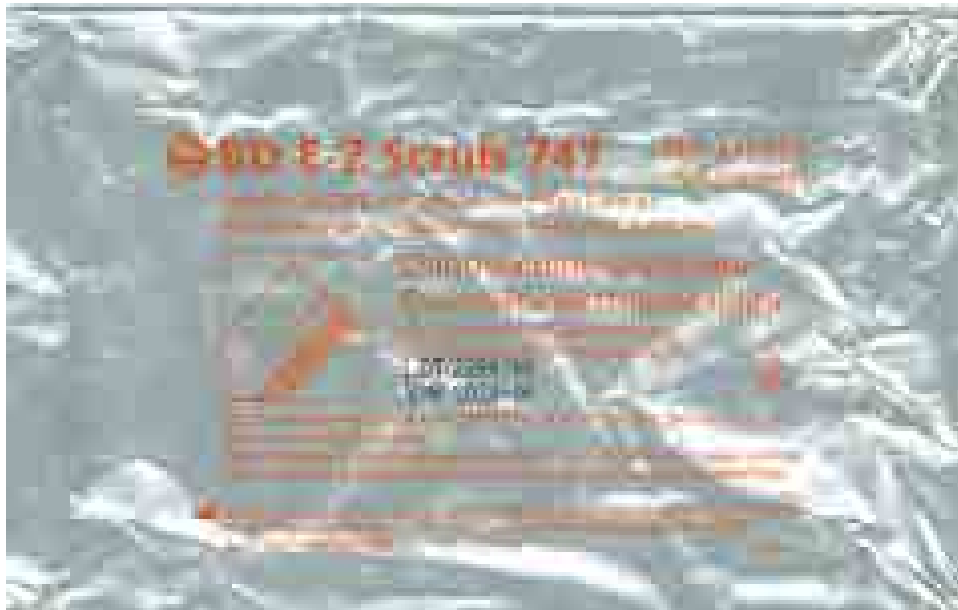
- Personal care items (i.e.: toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, hairbrush, deodorant).
- Loose-fitting underwear.
- Slip-on shoes that you can put on without bending over.
- Something to read or listen to (with headphones), while you are waiting.
- Cellphone and cellphone charger.
- Newborn items (clothes, blanket)
- Infant car seat (please leave this in the car until after you are transferred to your postpartum room).

## The evening before your C-section

- Between 4 and 8 p.m., the Birthing Unit clerk will call you to tell you when to come to the hospital for your scheduled C-section. This is called your “arrival time”. It is usually 2 to 3 hours before your C-section surgery should begin.
- If the clerk does not call you by 9 p.m. that night, please call the Obstetrical Assessment Unit (Triage):
  - » General Campus: 613-737-8012
  - » Civic Campus: 613-761-5112
- The clerk will not be able to answer medical questions. If you have questions about your pregnancy or other medical questions, please contact your health-care provider.

## Pre-surgical shower

Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG) cleaning sponges clean the skin before your C-section. Cleaning the skin this way lowers the risk of illness caused by germs in the area.



A photo of a CHG cleaning sponge in its package

## Shower instructions

- ✗ **Do not** use CHG sponges if you have an allergy or sensitivity to Chlorhexidine. If you are allergic, talk to your surgeon.
- ✓ If you show signs of an allergic reaction when using the CHG sponges (e.g., rash, itchy skin, etc.), wash the CHG off right away using soap and water.
- ✗ **Do not** use the CHG sponge near your face, eyes, ears, or mouth.
- ✗ **Do not** use the CHG sponge in body openings, like your vagina or anus. Washing around them is ok.
- ✗ **Do not** shower, take a bath or apply lotions, powder, moisturizers or other personal care products after washing with the CHG sponge.
- ✗ **Do not** shave, clip or wax your abdomen (stomach), pubic area, or upper thighs.
- ✗ **Do not** wash with normal soap after the CHG soap.
- ✗ **Please note:** CHG may cause a stain on fabrics that may not wash out. To prevent stains, do not let CHG and fabrics touch. Use non-chlorine laundry products to wash fabrics that may have touched CHG.

## Here is what to do:

Take **2 showers**, one the **night before** your C-section and one the **morning of your C-section**.

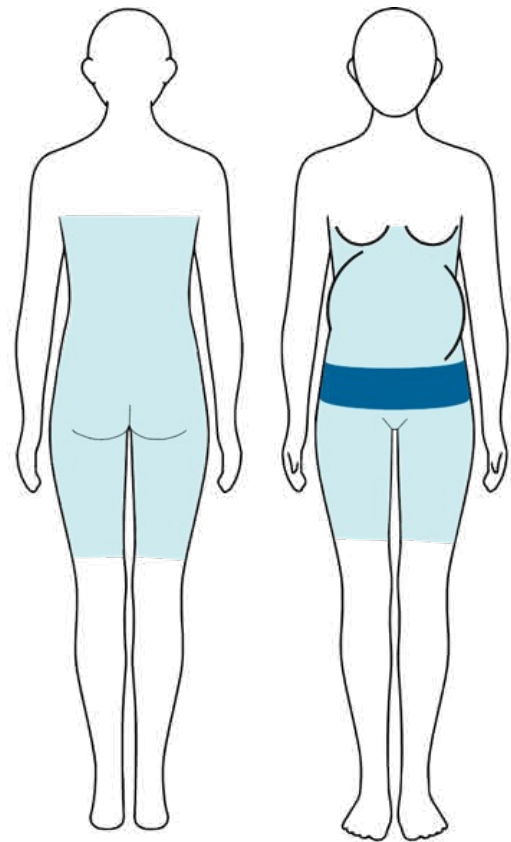
Please follow these steps for both showers:



1. Before you begin your shower, make sure that you have clean clothes to wear to bed and that your bedsheets are freshly washed the night before your C-section.
2. Remove all jewelry and body piercings before getting into the shower.
3. Wash your hair and body using your normal shampoo and soap. Rinse well. Step out of the stream of water or turn the shower off.

4. Open **1 CHG sponge** package and remove the sponge. Save the other package for your shower tomorrow morning.

5. Wash your body (see picture):

- » Clean the area below your chest/breasts all the way down to your knees (see picture). Clean all your crevices and skin folds in this area.
- » Clean your belly button thoroughly. Use a Q-tip if you need to.
- » Pay special attention to the planned incision area when washing. Pass the sponge over this area (dark blue) back and forth for 30 seconds.
- » Wash your **outer** genital and anal areas **last**. Do not use CHG sponge inside your vagina or anus.
- » Someone may need to help wash your back.



-  Planned incision area – wash this area very well
-  Wash these areas well

6. **Leave the CHG solution on your skin for 3 minutes.** Then lightly rinse your entire body.

7. Use a clean towel to pat your body dry.

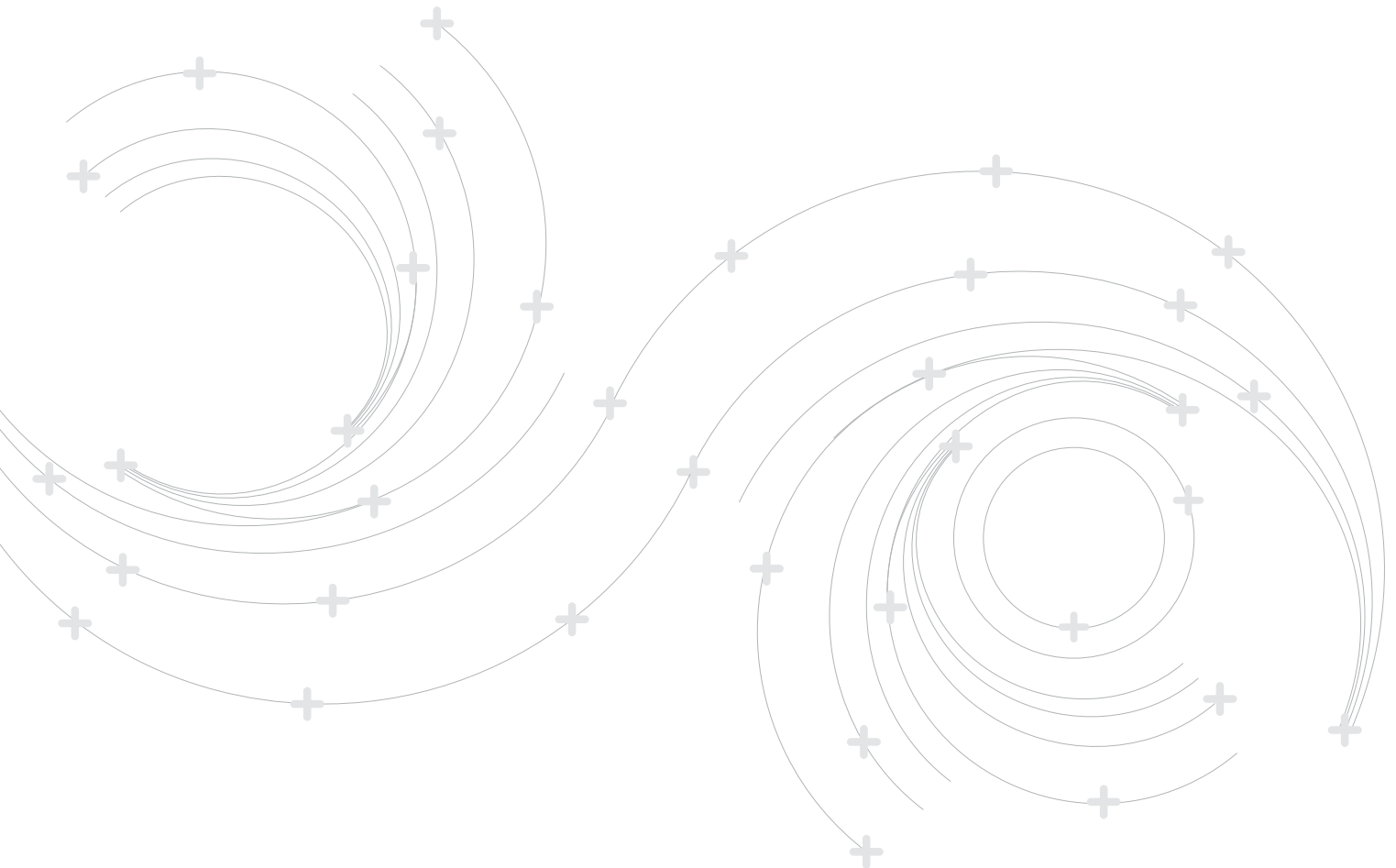
8. It is normal for your skin to feel a little “sticky” for a few minutes until the CHG dries completely.

9. **Repeat these instructions for your shower the morning of your C-section. Remember to use a clean towel and to dress in clean clothes.**

10. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your surgeon or the Obstetrical Assessment Unit (OAU).

## Eating and drinking

- ✘ **Do not eat** solid food, including gum and hard candies, after 11:59 p.m. the night before your C-section. For example, if your C-section is on Thursday, do not eat solid food after 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday.
- ✓ You can drink clear fluids until 90 minutes (1 ½ hours) before your arrival time.
  - » Clear fluids include water, apple juice, white cranberry juice, white grape juice, colorless soft drinks (Sprite, Ginger ale, 7-up) and colorless sports drinks (Gatorade, Powerade).
  - » If you have diabetes, please talk to your doctor or nurse at a scheduled pregnancy appointment about what to drink on the day of your C-section.
- ✘ Stop drinking clear fluids 90 minutes (1 ½ hours) before your arrival time.



# The day of your C-section

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- ✓ Unless your doctor told you something different, take your usual medications the morning of your C-section with a small sip of water.
- ✓ If you take insulin, speak with your doctor or diabetes nurse specialist at a scheduled pregnancy appointment about changes that you may need to make to your insulin dose on the morning and/or the night before your C-section.
- ✓ Shower using the same instructions that you followed the evening before.
- ✓ Brush your teeth, but do not swallow any water or toothpaste
- ✓ Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- ✓ Remove all piercings and jewelry.
- ✗ **Do not** shave, clip, or wax your abdomen, pubic area, or upper thighs.
- ✗ **Do not** wear perfume, lotions, makeup, or use hair products like gel or spray.
- ✗ **Do not** bring valuables, including, watches, jewelry, or keys to the hospital. The Ottawa Hospital is not responsible for any lost or stolen articles or belongings brought to the hospital. Patients who bring any valuables do so at their own risk.

## Arriving at the hospital

Please come to the hospital's Birthing Unit at your "arrival time" that the clerk gave you the night before. Your arrival time is usually 2 to 3 hours before your C-section so that you have lots of time to get ready.

- ✓ **1 person** may come with you to the Birthing Unit.
- ✓ All visitors must pass hospital screening questions and not show any signs of illness.
- ✓ If you can please leave your suitcase and infant car seat in the car until after you are transferred to your postpartum room.

## Time of your C-section

We will make every effort to start your C-section on time. There may be a delay if other patients need emergency surgery. We will tell you as soon as we know if your C-section will be delayed.

It is rare, but sometimes, the unit is too busy, and we may need to re-schedule your C-section.

### Your Cesarean section is planned for:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Scheduled arrival time:

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-surgical shower #1:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stop eating solid foods (midnight before your arrival time):

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ 11:59pm

### Pre-surgical shower #2:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stop drinking clear liquids (90 minutes before your arrival time):

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_



#### Where do I go if I have questions or need help:

Ask your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare team member about any questions that you might have.





## Do you have any feedback about this education resource?

Is it welcoming and respectful of your background, culture, and identity? Your opinion is important to us. Please fill out this [survey](#) or contact the Patient Education team at [patienteducation@toh.ca](mailto:patienteducation@toh.ca)



## Do you need this information in a different format?

Please tell a member of your health-care team so that they can provide you with this information in a format that works for you. This resource is available in English and in French. Cette ressource est disponible en anglais et en français.



## Booklet information

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