

NICE quality standards

Information for the public

Issue date: June 2013

Information for people who use NHS services for caesarean section

The NICE quality standard for caesarean section sets out what high-quality care in the NHS in England should include for women planning for or needing a caesarean section, so that the best care can be offered to pregnant women using NHS services in England.

NICE quality standard for caesarean section

The quality standard for caesarean section is made up of 9 statements that describe high-quality care for women planning for or needing a caesarean section. These statements are about the best care you should receive and are summarised below.

1. Pregnant women who have had a caesarean section in the past have a discussion with a member of their maternity team (which is recorded in their notes) about the option to plan a vaginal birth.
2. Pregnant women who ask for a caesarean section (when there is no medical reason) have a discussion with members of the maternity team (which is recorded in their notes) about the risks and benefits of a caesarean section compared with a vaginal birth.
3. Pregnant women who ask for a caesarean section because of anxiety about childbirth are offered a referral to a healthcare professional with expertise in mental health support for women approaching childbirth.

4. Pregnant women who may need a planned caesarean section have a consultant obstetrician involved in making the decision.
5. Women having a planned caesarean section have the procedure at or after 39 weeks of pregnancy, unless an earlier delivery is needed because of problems with the baby or the mother.
6. Women who, during labour, are being considered for an unplanned caesarean section because of complications have a consultant obstetrician involved in the decision.
7. Women in labour for whom a caesarean section is being considered because of concerns about the baby are offered a blood test from the baby's scalp (called fetal blood sampling) to help decide whether a caesarean section is needed.
8. Women who have had a caesarean section are offered a discussion and given written information about the reasons for their caesarean section and birth options for future pregnancies.
9. Women who have had a caesarean section are monitored for complications following the operation.

NICE has produced information for the public on caesarean section. See <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG132>

Your care

In the NHS, patients and healthcare professionals have rights and responsibilities as set out in the NHS Constitution (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>). All NICE quality standards are written to reflect these. You have the right to be involved in discussions and make informed decisions about your

treatment and care with your healthcare team. Your choices are important and healthcare professionals should support these wherever possible. You should be treated with dignity and respect.

Information from NICE about caesarean section

The full quality standard for caesarean section, written for healthcare professionals, is available from <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/QS32>.

NICE also produces guidance (advice) for the NHS in England and Wales about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions, based on the best available evidence.

NICE has produced guidance on caesarean section, available from <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG132>. The guidance was used to develop this quality standard.

Information for the public about the care and treatment recommended in the NICE guidance on caesarean section is available from <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG132>. It is written to help patients, their families and carers to understand the care and treatment options that should be available in the NHS.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Level 1A, City Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BT; www.nice.org.uk

© National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2013. All rights reserved. This material may be freely reproduced for educational and not-for-profit purposes. No reproduction by or for commercial organisations, or for commercial purposes, is allowed without the express written permission of NICE.