

HEALING THE WOUND AFTER CAESAREAN

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A woman whose previous birth was by caesarean may have another wound - a **memory**, imprinted in her body and mind. The physical healing of the scar on her abdomen sometimes covers over a festering wound in her innermost being. She may feel that she has moved on from the caesar, and accepted it, knowing that she can't change what has happened in the past. Yet it is likely that the memory will resurface from time to time. Being ready for this reminder is a major step on the road to healing.

In labour this woman will eventually reach the point at which her previous labour began to overwhelm her. That is likely to be a very difficult time, and it is essential that she has, by that time, her chosen midwife and other companions with her. There should be no 'onlookers', no-one who will distract her from her task. An atmosphere of quietness, with peaceful trusted companions, enables the work of labour to progress.

Many women enter a womb of warm water, giving relaxing relief from pain. This womb (which some call a birth pool) adds another level of privacy. The work of labour continues - in the depths of her body, which is in the depths of the tub. Even interruptions to listen to the fetal heart need to be minimised at this time. The woman may need to withdraw into a resting/sleeping state. She ought to know before labour that this is likely to happen, and that she will be given the support she needs throughout the journey.

She will become active and strong in her labour once she has gone beyond this challenging point. This is particularly crucial for women who have not had previous vaginal births. Once they have passed the point of previous 'arrest' they are like other first time mothers - working through new territory.

The imprint of a memory is not limited to previous caesarean births. Any traumatic experience that involved the woman's reproductive organs, including a sexual encounter, or a birth in which the woman's authority for her own body was denied, can leave memories that are unpleasant. The progress past that memory point is usually the moment when the woman says "Yes! I can do this!"

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