

# Caesarean section:

Surgical site complications,  
**you and your baby**

**Smith+Nephew**

## What do you know about surgical site complications?

Chances are you're reading this because your doctor (or obstetrician) has recommended a Caesarean section (C-section), or you are considering it as an option for the birth of your baby. If so, you may want to know:

- 1) **Whether it is a good choice for you**
- 2) **If there are any extra risks**

C-sections are generally safe, but like any type of surgery, they have some risks. One risk that is common to all types, is surgical site complications, particularly infection.

The following information may help you better understand your risk of surgical site infection and one option available to you and your doctor to help reduce it.

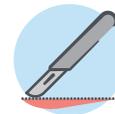
### What are surgical site infections?

**Any type of surgery – major or minor, emergency or planned (also called elective) – has risks.**

One of those risks is getting an infection at the place where a surgeon has opened your body to operate.<sup>1,2</sup>

- These are called surgical site infections (sometimes shortened to 'SSIs')

## How could you get a surgical site infection?



Surgical site infections are caused by bacteria getting into places where they shouldn't be.<sup>1,2</sup>

This can happen either during or after an operation,<sup>2</sup> especially if the incision isn't well protected.

Depending on the type of surgery, the chance of getting a surgical site infection can be different.<sup>3,4</sup>

- For example, surgical site infections are much more common after surgery on body parts where a lot of bacteria live, such as your bowels or groin<sup>3,4</sup>

Use of C-sections is increasing worldwide – here are some facts:<sup>5</sup>



**~20% of births are by C-section<sup>5</sup>**



**3–15% of C-section incisions develop an SSI<sup>6</sup>**



**Up to 5 days longer in hospital if you get an SSI after C-section<sup>7</sup>**



**Disrupted bonding from pain and trauma of recovering from SSIs<sup>6,8</sup>**

SSI = surgical site infection

## What factors affect whether I could get a surgical site infection?

Things called risk factors can make it more likely that you'll get an infection after surgery.

- The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of getting one<sup>9,10</sup>

For C-section, the main risk factors are:<sup>11,12</sup>



How long your C-section takes



Your age



If you have had a previous C-section



Smoking



Conditions like gestational diabetes or high blood pressure



Your weight

It is important for you to be as honest and accurate as possible about your health and lifestyle when you talk to your doctor.

This information, along with your medical records and physical examination, is used to help work out your risk factors.

Your doctor will also consider how that risk could affect your wound care after surgery.



## What can help to reduce my risk of getting a surgical site infection?

If your doctor determines that you are at risk of surgical site infections, they can use a special type of treatment called negative pressure to help reduce that risk.

Negative pressure can also help your wound to heal more quickly than using conventional types of dressings.<sup>9,13</sup>

Smith+Nephew make a disposable negative pressure device called **PICO**<sup>®</sup> Single Use Negative Pressure Wound Therapy System.



The **PICO** device is a small, lightweight, battery-powered box, attached by a soft tube to a specialised dressing.<sup>14,15</sup>

The dressing is applied to your incision straight after surgery and then attached to the device, which you keep on in hospital and at home for up to a week.

**PICO** therapy has been used to help prevent surgical site infections after many surgery types, including C-sections, particularly for patients with risk factors.<sup>16-18</sup>

Most healthcare professionals just call it '**PICO**'

In one big study, use of the **PICO** device helped to cut the risk of surgical site infection by half for obese women who had C-sections<sup>19</sup>

## How does the PICO<sup>o</sup> device work?

- The box works by creating continuous suction (a vacuum) that helps hold the incision edges together and keeps your blood flowing well<sup>20,21</sup>
- The **PICO** device also removes unwanted fluids and infectious material from the incision site (some gets locked in the dressing and the rest evaporates)<sup>22</sup>
- The dressing can be left alone for up to 7 days if it doesn't get full (stained over a large area)<sup>23</sup>
- Leaving the dressing undisturbed protects the incision site and helps to keep it clean<sup>24</sup>



All these actions may help prevent a surgical site infection



## Will the PICO<sup>o</sup> device affect my activity?

It shouldn't disrupt your activities much because it is light, portable and comfortable.<sup>14,15</sup>

- The device can be clipped to your clothes, so it is easy to keep it safe and discreet<sup>14</sup>
- The **PICO** device is quiet,<sup>25</sup> so nobody should hear it working and it won't disturb your sleep
- The dressing is waterproof,<sup>26</sup> so you can keep it on to wash or have a light shower



If your doctor thinks you are at risk of a surgical site infection, they might talk to you about using PICO therapy



If you are worried about surgical site infections, ask your doctor if PICO therapy might be a good option

## Want to know more about C-sections, surgical site infections or negative pressure?

You can get more information from medical institutions and family planning organisations, such as:

**Patient information leaflets**

from the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

**Practical advice and support**

from [www.Parents.com](http://www.Parents.com)

You can also learn more about the **PICO<sup>o</sup>** device and how it works on C-section wounds online from Smith+Nephew.

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