

Risks and side-effects continued

With an instrumental birth:

- You may have bruising around your vagina and/or perineum.
- There is a rare chance of injury to your pelvic floor muscles, bladder or bowels.
- Pēpi may experience bruising on the scalp and/or face.
- Pēpi may experience a haematoma (collection of blood under the skin).
- There is a rare chance of a ventouse causing a significant bleed under the scalp of pēpi (subgaleal haemorrhage).
- There is a very rare chance of forceps causing a nerve injury to the face of pēpi. This does not affect the brain and will heal.
- There is a higher chance of pēpi experiencing shoulder dystocia, where the shoulders do not come out as intended. Your team will take steps to help deliver the shoulders.
- Pēpi may be reluctant to suck and latch on the breast. If pēpi won't latch, your midwife can help you to express colostrum. You can also do safe skin-to-skin contact with pēpi, and offer a feed when you notice feeding cues

In extremely rare cases, pēpi may have:

- A skull fracture.
- A bleed into the brain.
- A spinal cord injury.
- A brain haemorrhage.

Informed choice

No medical procedure can be performed and no medication can be given without your informed consent, even if it is a routine practice. Before giving your consent, your medical team must fully and clearly explain to you:

- How this treatment or procedure will help
- What happens during the treatment or procedure
- What other options there might be
- What you can expect after the treatment or procedure
- Any risks that may be associated with the treatment or procedure

Please talk to your LMC, midwife and/or doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights

Te Whatu Ora
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**Assisted Vaginal
Birth (Forceps
and Ventouse)**

Assisted birth

Instruments are tools which are used to assist (help) the birth. They are used to guide pēpi (baby) to move through the birth canal.

Most babies are born without the help of instruments. However, a doctor will sometimes recommend using them to help māmā (the person giving birth) or pēpi. A doctor will recommend the help of instruments if:

- Pēpi is not coming through the birth canal as expected.
- There are concerns about the wellbeing of pēpi and a quicker delivery is needed.
- You are unable to continue pushing.
- You have had an epidural and do not have the sensation to continue pushing.

The midwife will call a doctor to decide if assistance may be needed. The doctor will need to do an internal examination to decide if it is safe to perform an assisted birth. There are two types of instruments that may be used:

Ventouse

A ventouse is a cup, either metal or rubber, which is placed on the head of pēpi. The air is vacuumed out of the cup, creating a suction. This lets the doctor pull as you push during a contraction, guiding pēpi through the birth canal.

Forceps

Forceps are a pair of smooth, curved tongs which are slid down the sides of the head of pēpi. The doctor uses the forceps to pull as you push during a contraction, guiding pēpi through the birth canal.



Ventouse (left), Forceps (right)

During an assisted birth

If you consent to an assisted birth, you will be offered pain relief, and have a small tube called a catheter put in. The catheter will empty your bladder and help prevent bladder injury.

The doctor will check your cervix to make sure you are fully dilated and to check the position of pēpi. The midwife will be monitoring the heart rate of pēpi, and your wellbeing.

The doctor will explain which instrument will be used. The midwife or doctor will advise you on when you should push, and when you should stop pushing.

The doctor may recommend an episiotomy, which is a cut in the tissue between the vagina and anus, to prevent further injury.

Which instrument will be used?

The instrument used will depend on the clinical assessment by your doctor, which includes:

- The position of the head of your pēpi
- Which instrument is most likely to lead to a successful and safe birth of pēpi

The decision around which instrument is used is made after the internal examination. Your doctor will only recommend an assisted vaginal birth if it is the safest thing for you and pēpi.

What if an assisted birth does not help?

If an assisted birth does not help pēpi to move down the birth canal, a Caesarean may be needed.

In some cases, the doctor may move you to the operating theatre before trying the forceps or ventouse. This means a Caesarean can be done faster if it is necessary.

Risks and side-effects

Most assisted births do not have more problems compared to a spontaneous vaginal birth. It is important to understand that an assisted birth is only considered if there are concerns about pēpi or the person giving birth.

There are many benefits to an assisted vaginal birth (rather than a Caesarean) when you are fully dilated.

Caesarean delivery at full dilatation increases the risk of bleeding, infection, and injury to other organs. It can also increase your risk of preterm birth in a future pregnancy.

Risks and side effects are continued over the page.