

## 1. Patient summary

The ability to drive a car following abdominal operations such as caesarean section is important for women. In general, it may take between two and six weeks before most women are ready to resume driving a private vehicle. Safety of the woman and any passengers is of paramount importance. Women need to be able to sit comfortably, work the controls, wear a seatbelt, look over their shoulder, make an emergency stop, and should not be using any medication or analgesics that cause sedation. Before attempting to drive, women should check their relevant insurance status. Considerations may be different for women driving commercial vehicles.

## 2. Summary of recommendations

| Recommendation 1   | Grade                          |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Women should be advised to assess whether they can comfortably sit in the car, work the controls, wear a seatbelt, look over their shoulder, make an emergency stop, and be free from the effects of sedating medications when considering resuming driving after surgery. | Consensus based recommendation |
| Recommendation 2   | Grade                          |
| Women should be advised that the period of recovery after surgery is variable. In general, it may take 2-6 weeks before women are ready to resume driving after abdominal surgery. The recommendations for commercial vehicle drivers may be different.                    | Consensus based recommendation |
| Recommendation 3   | Grade                          |
| Insurance companies are generally guided by medical advice regarding driving. Women should enquire from their insurance companies whether there are any policy exclusions.   | Consensus based recommendation |

## 3. Introduction

Women are given a wide range of advice about resuming driving after surgery, including avoiding driving for long periods of time.<sup>1,2</sup> The pattern of recovery after abdominal surgery including caesarean delivery can be highly variable between individuals, and depends on many factors. A review has yielded limited evidence, and because of this, there are no universal guidelines to advise when women may recommence driving after abdominal surgery including caesarean delivery or abdominal hysterectomy.

## 4. Discussion and recommendations

### 4.1. What factors should women take into account when considering resuming driving after surgery?

The ability to brake in an emergency and perform unexpected manoeuvres is essential to safe driving, and this ability may be compromised by pain and or reduced freedom of movement. Fatigue and the influence of sedating medications are also important considerations when considering returning to driving. Other medical conditions, type of surgical incision/ surgery, operative complications, driving experience and ability, length of trips, and type of vehicle may also influence driving capacity. Women should be advised to assess whether they can comfortably sit in the car, work the controls, make an emergency stop, wear a seatbelt and look over their shoulder, when considering resuming driving after surgery. A seat belt must be worn at all times whether driver or passenger.