

Labor Induction



Labor induction is a way to help get your labor started. This can protect your health and your baby's, too.

Reasons for inducing labor

A healthcare provider will decide to induce labor if the health of the birth parent or baby is at risk by continuing the pregnancy. These conditions include:

- Preeclampsia
- Poor fetal growth
- Low amniotic fluid
- Infection of the membranes (chorioamnionitis)
- Ruptured bag of water
- Certain diseases, like diabetes

Labor induction may also be done after 39 weeks for a nonmedical reason, such as if the pregnant person lives far away from the hospital.

Ways to induce labor

Your healthcare provider can get your labor started by using one or more of these methods:

- **Prostaglandin.** This is a medicine that may be given as a pill, capsule, or vaginal suppository. It softens, thins (effaces), and opens (dilates) the cervix. This is called cervical ripening. Your healthcare provider may also use a Foley catheter or a double balloon catheter. They insert the catheter into your cervix to push it open. This causes the release of natural prostaglandins.
- **Pitocin (oxytocin).** This is a medicine your healthcare provider gives you through an IV (intravenous) line. You may get it within 4 to 24 hours after you have prostaglandin. Pitocin helps start contractions. It's always given in the hospital.
- **Rupturing the membrane.** This is a procedure in which your healthcare provider uses a small tool to break your bag of water. This is done more often in people who have given birth before. And it's always done in the hospital. Your cervix needs to be dilated enough before this procedure. The baby's head also needs to be down and close to the cervix.

Risks of labor induction

With labor induction, you may have a higher risk of:

- A cesarean section (surgical delivery), but there may be a lower chance of this in a first delivery
- An infection
- A longer stay in the hospital
- Uterine rupture (rare)
- Fetal death (extremely rare)

What to expect

Prostaglandin may be given in the hospital or at home. Fetal monitoring is needed after placement.

Other methods of inducing labor are done in the hospital. You'll need to stay in the hospital until you give birth. Your healthcare provider may attach monitors to your belly. These will measure your contractions and help make sure your baby has no problems.

No matter how your labor is induced, a few factors may affect how long it takes you to give birth. These include how long it takes for your cervix to thin and open, and when contractions begin.

Give yourself time

Even though inducing labor gets the process started, you still may need to wait. People who have labor induced most often give birth within a day or so. But it can take as long as a few days to give birth.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.