



INDUCTION OF LABOR

WHAT IS AN INDUCTION OF LABOR?

An induction of labor is the use of medications or other treatments to help start your labor before your body goes into labor on its own.

WHEN MIGHT AN INDUCTION OF LABOR BE RECOMMENDED?

- You or your baby have a medical problem that may get worse if your pregnancy continues
- You are more than a week past your due date
- You are at least 39 weeks and electing to be induced for personal reasons (Please note, this may not be able to be accommodated depending on the availability of the hospital.)

HOW LONG WILL AN INDUCTION OF LABOR TAKE?

This will depend greatly on how ready your body is for labor when you arrive the day of induction. The induction process is shorter the more ready your cervix is for labor.

- As a guideline, it generally takes 24-48 hours for cervical ripening and an additional 12-24 hours for induction.
- Especially for individuals who are having their first vaginal birth, it can take 1-3 days from the time you are admitted until the baby is born.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO THE INDUCTION OF LABOR PROCESS?

- Frequent or excessive uterine contractions that may cause changes in baby's heart rate pattern (for example: decelerations or drop in the heart rate).
- Increased chance of use of vacuum or forceps for delivery.
- Rare chance of uterine rupture which would require surgery to repair. (This risk is increased if you have previously had a uterine incision such as previous cesarean or other uterine surgery.)

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN INDUCTION OF LABOR?

You will be admitted to the labor and delivery unit. An IV will be placed, lab work will be drawn, vital signs will be taken, and your cervix will be checked to help determine the plan for your induction.

Throughout the process, your baby's heart rate and your contraction pattern will be monitored. This may be continuous or intermittent depending on the methods used for induction. There are portable monitors available that will allow you to walk the halls or use the tub/shower if you desire.

WHAT IS CERVICAL RIPENING?

Cervical ripening is the first part of the induction process. It is used to get your cervix soft and ready for labor. During this process, you might have some cramping or contractions, but your labor has not yet begun. Cervical ripening methods include:

- Prostaglandins - a synthetic version of a naturally occurring hormone during the labor process that helps to soften and thin the cervix
 - Cervidil - medication placed vaginally that will stay in place for 12 hours
 - Cytotec - medication that can be placed vaginally or taken by mouth every 4 hours for several doses
- Cervical Ripening Balloons - a tube that is inserted through the cervix and then 1-2 balloons are inflated to help your body release prostaglandin and causes pressure that leads to mechanical dilation of the cervix

WHAT ARE THE INDUCTION METHODS?

Once your cervix is soft and ready for labor, then an induction method will be used to cause more frequent, regular contractions that will increase in intensity.

- Artificial Rupture of Membranes (AROM) - breaking your bag of water.
- Pitocin - a synthetic version of a naturally occurring hormone that causes uterine contractions. This medication will be given through the IV and adjusted to a rate that is appropriate for you.

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH INDUCTION METHOD WILL BE USED?

The induction method recommended will largely be determined by your cervical exam. If your cervix is not very dilated (closed, fingertip, 1-2cm), one of the cervical ripening methods will be used. If your cervix is a little more dilated (2-3cm or more), cervical ripening may not be needed. Other factors that may influence what method is recommended include:

- The number of previous vaginal deliveries (If this is your first vaginal delivery, you may need more cervical ripening than if you have had previous vaginal deliveries)
- If you have had a previous cesarean delivery (There are certain methods that cannot be used during a trial of labor after cesarean)
- Your choice (If there are methods you prefer to avoid, please let your provider know!)