

WARNING:

Do not attempt to induce or augment labor at home.

The process of induction of labor may take several days.

If you have any questions, seek the advice of a qualified medical professional.

Words you may not know:

Braxton Hicks contractions: Irregular contractions of the womb. The body is practicing.

Cervix: Opening of the uterus

Contraction: Tightening and shortening of a muscle in the uterus. Normally felt in the stomach and lower back.

Dilation: The process of enlargement, stretching, or expansion. The cervix is opening.

Effacement: Thinning and shortening of the cervix

Episiotomy: An incision performed between the vagina and the rectum that is used to increase the size of the opening of the vagina to assist in delivery of a baby.

Fetal distress: Compromise of the baby during the antepartum period (before labor) or intrapartum period (birth process). Fetal distress may require the baby to be delivered quickly.

Labor: Rhythmic contractions that cause change in the cervix

Membranes: A very thin layer of tissue that encloses the baby and amniotic water in the uterus.



Information on Labor, Induction and Augmentation: How it affects me and what I can do?

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Labor and delivery normally goes smoothly with very few complications. At times, there may be a need for assistance in getting the labor started. This can be done in several different ways. The starting of labor through medical and non-medical means is called induction. Assisting the labor process is called augmentation. Here you will learn a little bit about both.

What is augmentation? Why would I need it?

During the labor process, your labor may slow down or seem to quit altogether. Augmentation involves methods to increase the strength of the contraction. It can be done for non-medical reasons; for the health of mother and/or baby; or to expedite a natural labor process. Some of the ways in which a labor is augmented are:

- Use of Pitocin
- Walking
- Breaking the water bag
- Breast stimulation
- Pressure techniques

You and your provider must decide which techniques you will use during the labor process. You can expect to walk, shower, use the birthing ball, empty your bladder, and change positions frequently during your labor. This helps keep the labor process at a steady pace, it also can reduce the pain you may experience.

Depending on your personal needs and labor process, you may or may not experience the need for labor augmentation. If you do, that's okay.

What is induction? Why would I need this done? How is it done?

Induction is the process of starting labor by artificial means. Labor can be induced for many reasons. Labor is induced for valid medical reasons because of the risks involved with induction of labor. Some of the reasons for induction include:

- Maternal illness (high blood pressure, diabetes, uterine infection, etc.)
- Fetal illness
- 42 completed weeks of gestation (Post dates)
- Water breaks without contractions after several hours

Not wanting to be pregnant any longer is *NOT* a good reason for induction.

Labor can be induced a number of ways. Some of the more common methods include:

- Breaking the bag of water (Amniotomy)
- Pitocin (Synthetic hormone to start contractions)
- Transcervical Balloon Catheter (Foley catheter inserted into the cervix)
- “Stripping the Membranes”
- Cytotec or Cervidil (Medications used to soften the cervix.)

The most common non-medical induction methods can include:

- Nipple stimulation
- Sexual intercourse (as long as the bag of water is intact)

You and your provider will talk about which methods of induction are right for you. You are ultimately in control of your labor process.

What are the risks of inducing labor?

The risks of inducing labor include:

- Increased risk of premature baby, even if you believe your baby is term
- Placental Abruption
- Fetal Distress
- Uterine Rupture
- Increased risk of cesarean section (C-section)
- Increased use of interventions including pain relief, continuous fetal monitoring and other interventions

When induction is needed for medical reasons, the benefits of induction outweigh the risks. It is better to be cautious when it comes to the labor and delivery process. The health of you and your baby are of prime importance to us.