



Information about Induction of Labour and Top Tips

What is Induction of Labour?

About 33% (or one in three) of women have their labour induced. A labour induction is the process used to start labour artificially. This may be needed for a variety of reasons, most commonly because you have gone past your due date, or because your waters have broken but your labour contractions have not yet started. This leaflet helps explain what happens during an induction. If you have any questions about why induction is being recommended for you, and what other options you have, please speak to your midwife or doctor.



How is labour induced?

Labour is usually induced in one or more of the following ways:

1. The cervix (neck of the womb) is softened using vaginal prostaglandins. This means a small 'tablet' or 'pessary' is inserted into the vagina where it slowly starts to soften and open the cervix.
2. Once your cervix is open enough, you may need the waters surrounding the baby to be broken (also known as Artificial Rupture of Membranes or ARM).
3. If contractions still do not start, a drug is given using a drip in the arm to start them off. The drug (artificial oxytocin) is given to around 60% of women (six in ten) who have labour induced.

How long will induction take?

During induction, the safety of you and your baby is our most important consideration. Induction may take hours and even days because:

- The process of induction itself can take some time
 - You may have to wait for a bed in the hospital before your induction can be started.
 - The process of softening and opening the cervix can up to four to five days, and, occasionally, it may not work.

- There is sometimes a delay before your waters can be broken. When this is done, we need to monitor you and your baby more closely so you may need to wait for a place in the Delivery Suite to become available before we can start the process.
- Sometimes there are delays in the system
 - Occasionally, the unit can become very busy with women arriving in labour or needing urgent care. We always prioritise our workload based on medical needs and the consultant in charge of the Delivery Suite will make decisions about who is prioritised.
 - If our maternity unit is very busy, we may offer you the option of moving, normally to either Heartlands or Good Hope Hospital, where your induction can be started or continued sooner. It is up to you whether you choose to accept this option or not.



It is important that you let your support network (e.g. partner, family, other children and those caring for them) aware that induction of labour can take several days before the baby is born.

What happens once I start the induction process?

We will monitor you and your baby throughout the induction process. How often will depend on the reason for your induction of labour. Between monitoring, we will encourage you to walk about or use the ‘birthing balls’, as being active can help to encourage labour to start. You will usually have plenty of time to relax in between examinations.

Is there anything that I can do to increase my chances of going into labour?

There isn’t any evidence eating pineapple, spicy foods, castor oil, herbal or homeopathy supplements, or activities such as acupuncture, hot baths, enemas or sexual intercourse, help to induce labour.

Membrane sweeps can be effective. You should be offered membrane sweeps at the end of your pregnancy. This is an internal examination that may help your body to go into labour. The midwife or doctor places a finger through the cervix and makes circular movements. This will separate the membranes from the cervix and increase the chances of labour starting

naturally within the following 48 hours. A membrane sweep may be uncomfortable, and you may have a 'show' later in the day. The 'show' is a plug of mucus, (sometimes brown or spotted with blood) which is released as the cervix begins to open. A membrane sweep should not cause heavy bleeding, and if this happens you should contact triage.

We know that having a sweep will reduce the chances of needing to induce labour for prolonged pregnancy. For every eight women who have a membrane sweep, one of them will avoid having to have an induction. If labour doesn't start after a sweep, the sweep will usually have helped the cervix to become softer, so if induction of labour is needed, it will be easier.



What should I bring with me to hospital?

Bring your overnight bag and baby clothes, nappies etc.

As the induction process can take some time please bring in some books, magazines, card games etc. to help pass the time. Pack clothes and footwear you feel comfortable in, ideally light layers as it can get warm or chilly. It is not necessary to wear night clothes in the daytime as we actively encourage you to be mobile, depending on any medical condition you may have.



We will provide you with meals and drinks. You can also bring your own food or buy additional food, snacks or drinks. There is a restaurant located on the lower ground floor and a coffee shop on the ground floor near the main entrance.

You can bring your mobile phone and other electronic equipment (music, films etc) into hospital (you are responsible for their safety). When listening to devices, please use headphones and only answer or make calls when you will not be disturbing others. If you bring a charger, you will need to ask a ward clerk to have it checked before you can plug it in. There is also a phone charging point in the main entrance area of the hospital.

COVID 19 restrictions

- You will offered a pre-admission COVID 19 swab test the day before your planned induction admission.

- Currently with COVID 19 restrictions your birth partner cannot be with you during the induction process but can join you once you are transferred to Delivery Suite.
- Your partner will be offered a COVID 19 test when they attend Delivery Suite with you.

What about my birth partner?

- The facilities on Delivery Suite for partners are limited with only a chair being available for rest.
- Your partner will not be provided with meals so will need to provide their own food and drink - there is access to a small shop and restaurant (masks must be worn).
- Please ask your birth partner to update your family or friends on how you are getting on as staff cannot disclose confidential information across the telephone.

Top Tips:

- Do ask if you have any questions or concerns
- Request a membrane sweep before your induction
- Pack food and drinks plus things to do while in hospital
- Wear comfortable clothes and footwear
- Keep active in between examinations
- Ask your birth partner to keep your family and friends informed about your induction progress

Induction is a safe, routine procedure but it is perfectly normal to feel a bit concerned. The midwives and doctors looking after you will be happy to answer any questions and will let you know what is happening as your induction progresses.



More information can be found in the full leaflet about induction available on the hospital website <https://bwc.nhs.uk/download.cfm?ver=3905> or by using this QR code.

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