

Inducing Labor

It's usually best for both mom and baby for babies to be delivered when they are full term, which is after 39 weeks gestation. But if your health or your baby's health is at risk, your doctor may decide to induce labor sooner than that. Your labor may also be induced if you have gone far past your due date, as well as for other complications of pregnancy.

Inducing labor means your doctor will give you medicine or use other methods such as breaking your water to trigger contractions which will cause you to go into labor on your own. Other reasons why your doctor may induce labor include: gestational diabetes, complications such as high blood pressure or preeclampsia, having too little amniotic fluid, your water has broken but labor hasn't started yet, your baby is growing too slowly, or an infection in your uterus.

To induce labor, first, your doctor will do a cervical exam to check for dilation. If your cervix is still closed or not dilated enough, you will need to have your cervix "ripened" before giving medicine to cause regular contractions. This can be done with a hormone called prostaglandin. It can be given as a vaginal suppository, vaginal tablet, or a tablet taken by mouth. Alternatively, a catheter may be placed through the opening of the cervix and inflated with fluid to help the cervix open.

"We break your water if and when we need to, and we just spur on your own labor. Get your own contractions going so that we can see that cervical dilation, see baby coming down in your pelvis more and ultimately get to the point that you can push."

Inducing labor is different for every woman and depends on how dilated her cervix is, how far along she is, and if she has given birth vaginally before. Labor that is induced usually lasts longer than spontaneous labor, and sometimes can last for a few days.

If your doctor recommends inducing labor, ask if you can wait until at least 39 weeks of pregnancy. This gives your baby the time he needs to grow and develop before birth. Inducing labor should not be scheduled because you want to pick your baby's birthday or because it fits your doctor's schedule.

It should only be done when medically necessary because of an increased risk of cesarean section. As your due date approaches, talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about inducing your labor. Inducing labor may be the best way to ensure you deliver a healthy baby.