

Induction of Labor

Naturally labor may begin with the onset of regular uterine contractions which will cause your cervix to dilate, in some cases your water may break before you get contractions. The length of your cervix starts out long and thick. With contractions your cervix thins out, shortens and then dilates or open up. Sometimes, medication is needed to “ripen or soften the cervix if it is not dilating. Various medications are used to soften the cervix; others are used to increase the frequency, duration and strength of the contractions. The medication that will be used is up to your doctor and will depend on your cervical exam at the time.

Inducing labor means to start the labor process, when you’re not already in labor. Augmenting labor means to stimulate uterine contractions that have started but stopped or slowed down. Inducing your labor may be done when your health care provider determines there is a medical indication.

Amniotomy also known as (artificial rupture of membranes) is when the doctor or midwife breaks your water bag with a small device during a vaginal exam; this can start your labor. However, in order to do this, the head should be low and the cervix should be dilated. Your health care provider will determine this.

Sometimes your water breaks on its own as a slow leak or constant trickle, it is important to note the time and color of the fluid and to go the hospital when this occurs.

Medications to induce/augment labor: Some medications are called cervical ripening agents and will be discussed. Cervidil softens the cervix and is like a string with medicine inserted vaginally similar to a tampon that stays in 12 hours then removed and other medication may be started. Cytotec are small pills inserted vaginally that cause contractions and used as a cervical ripening agent.

Pitocin is administered through an intravenous on an infusion pump to cause uterine contractions. Any of these necessitate you being attached to a fetal monitor to assess & evaluate your contractions and monitor the baby’s heart rate.

Labor is evaluated in different stages, which are classified according to your cervical exam. The duration may depend on if it’s your first pregnancy or if you have had multiple pregnancies, subsequent pregnancies seem to take less time.