



Induction of Labor

What is an Induction of Labor?

Induction of labor (IOL) means using medications or other methods to start labor before it begins on its own. Doctors may recommend induction if it is safer for your or your baby to deliver sooner rather than wait for natural labor. They can take several days for first-time parents.

Reasons for Induction

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), induction may be recommended if:

- You are past your due date (often after 41 weeks).
- You are over the age of 35.
- Your water has broken but contractions have not started.
- There are concerns about your health (high blood pressure, diabetes).
- There are concerns about your baby's health or growth

Elective Inductions and the ARRIVE Trial

An elective induction is when labor is started by choice, rather than for a medical reason. According to the ARRIVE trial (2018), healthy first-time mothers who choose induction at 39 weeks had:

- A slightly lower chance of cesarean birth compared to women who waited for labor to start naturally.
- No increased risks for the baby.
- Similar or sometimes shorter overall length of hospital stay.

****It is important to note elective inductions might be pushed last minute by 24-48 hours for more urgent, medically-indicated deliveries if the hospital is particularly busy. This is for your and your baby's safety. You will be brought in to start your induction as soon as it is safe to do so.****

Cervical Ripening

Cervical ripening is softening and thinning of the cervix so that it can open (dilate).

This can be done with:

- Medicine (prostaglandins)
- Cervidil: A small shoestring-like insert with medication on the end, stays in place for 12 hours
- Cytotec (misoprostol): Tiny pill that goes in the cheek or vagina
- Cook balloon (like foley): Small balloon placed inside cervix and gently inflated to mechanically dilate the cervix; falls out at 3-5cm dilation.

Induction Agents

- Oxytocin (pitocin): Given through IV, starts at 2 units, goes up by 2 every 20-30 minutes.
- Artificial rupture of membranes (AROM; breaking your water)

What to Expect with an Induction

The process can take time. Especially for first-time mothers, induction often takes 2-3 days from start to active labor and delivery.

The first part (cervical ripening) is usually the longest. This is part of your induction, not separate, and is done at the hospital. It can take 12-24 hours for ripening, alone; thus pitocin often is not started right away the morning after you present for ripening.

Once the cervix is softened and favorable and then contractions are established, labor often progresses more quickly. Pain relief via epidural is available at any point and will last from start until delivery. Throughout the process, your baby's heartbeat and your contractions will be closely monitored. Inductions are typically scheduled approximately 2 weeks ahead of when they need to take place.

Induction is generally safe, but possible risks include:

- Stronger or more frequent contractions
- Changes in baby's heart rate or infection

Remember: Induction is a safe, common procedure. Every labor is unique, and your team will work with you to keep you and your baby safe.

What to Expect After Delivery

- After a vaginal delivery, you will move to a postpartum room a few hours after birth and stay until 1-2 days later. If you have a cesarean delivery you will stay an extra day, 2-4 days, prior to going home.
- While at the hospital, the on-call provider will check in with you daily after your delivery.