



Induction of Labor:

Your Guide to an Informed Birthing Experience

WHAT IS INDUCTION OF LABOR?

Induction of labor means your healthcare team helps start your labor, instead of waiting for it to happen naturally. About 1 out of every 3 births in the United States used labor induction in 2020.

Labor induction is a process that uses medicine or other methods to help start labor.

It's important that you talk with your doctor or midwife to make decisions together about your induction and labor.



Why might you have an induction?

There are several reasons why your doctor or midwife might suggest induction. Some of the most common reasons are:



You are past your due date: Your pregnancy has gone longer than expected, and it may be safer to give birth now.



Your water broke, but contractions haven't started: Labor usually begins after your water breaks. If it doesn't, induction may help get things moving.



A health concern makes it safer for you or your baby to give birth sooner: For example, high blood pressure, diabetes, or certain other conditions.



Elective induction: You and your doctor may decide to start labor early for personal reasons — but only if it's safe for you and your baby.



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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF INDUCTION?

Just like any medical procedure, induction has risks and benefits. There are scientific studies that tell us which induction of labor methods have the most benefit and help lower these risks.

Benefits of an induction using proven methods:

- ✓ Labor may not last as long.
- ✓ May lower your chance of needing a C-section, which is surgery to deliver your baby.
- ✓ May lower the risk of problems like heavy bleeding after birth.
- ✓ May lower the risk of your baby needing help breathing or needing to go to intensive care.

Risks of all inductions:

- ⚠ Contractions can feel stronger or more painful.
- ⚠ Your baby's heart rate may change, so your care team will watch closely.
- ⚠ You may still need a C-section.
- ⚠ There may be a higher chance of infection or bleeding compared to waiting for labor to start on its own.

HOW LONG WILL INDUCTION TAKE?

Every person is different.



While many inductions last less than 24 hours, some can take a few days, so be prepared for a longer stay.

Your care team will let you know what to expect based on where you are starting and how you are progressing.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING MY INDUCTION?

There are a few things that can be done to help start your labor. Your doctor or midwife will help you understand which options are best for you and your baby. **You will not be alone—your care team will guide and support you throughout induction.**

Membrane Sweeping

A doctor uses a gloved finger to gently separate the amniotic sac from the cervix. This releases hormones that can help start labor. It can be done in the clinic or hospital.

Cervical Balloon + Medications

Your cervix is the opening to the womb. A soft balloon is placed in your cervix and filled with fluid to help it open. Discomfort is normal and your care team can help you cope. The balloon is often combined with medicines (like Pitocin, given through an IV, or Misoprostol, a pill) to start contractions or strengthen labor.

Water Breaking

Artificial rupture of membranes means your doctor breaks your water (the fluid around your baby) to help your labor progress. This usually causes a warm gush and mild pressure.

Cervical Checks

As labor progresses, your care team will check how much your cervix has opened (dilated) every 1–4 hours, depending on your stage of labor and how you and your baby are responding. As you move forward in labor, checks may happen more often.



GETTING READY FOR INDUCTION

Preparing ahead can help you feel more informed and comfortable on the day of your induction. Use this worksheet to organize your thoughts and get ready:

Questions for My Care Team

List your questions here:

Support Person

Will there be someone in the delivery room with you? If so, who?

Packing List

Induction can take several hours or even a few days. Pack comfort items like books, a tablet, music, cozy clothes, and a pillow or blanket to help you feel more comfortable.

Pain Management

What pain management methods—such as medicine, breathing techniques, or movement—would you prefer to use?

Reminders



- Every induction is different; plans may change as labor progresses.
- Arrange care for children, pets, or family members during your stay.
- Sometimes there may be delays; ask your doctor what to expect, including eating and drinking guidelines before and during induction.
- Your safety and your baby's safety are always the top priority.
- It's normal to have questions—your care team is here to support you.