

INDUCTION OF LABOUR



Induction of Labour

Sometimes a pregnancy goes past the “due date”. When the pregnancy goes past 41 weeks and labour does not set in naturally, then your obstetrician may decide to induce labour.

What is Induced Labour ?

When labour is started artificially, it is said to be induced. It is always planned in advance and you will be able to discuss advantages and disadvantages with your doctor. **Labour is induced when there is danger to the baby or mother.** It may be induced under the following conditions :

- When you are well past your due date
- You have pre-eclampsia and there are complications which will affect you and baby
- There is placental insufficiency
- Baby's growth is slowed down or the baby is not moving well
- When the contractions slow down in the first stage of labour and it is important to restart labour.

One thing that needs to be considered is that induced labour is much more painful than the natural one and you may require to have an epidural so that you are prepared for a caesarean or an assisted delivery, if necessary.

Is it true that making love can induce labour ?

It is true that sex can help to induce labour but only when the term is almost complete or you are overdue. The reason is that semen contains prostaglandins (a substance naturally found in the womb lining responsible for softening the cervix and stimulating uterine contractions to initiate labour). Lovemaking also stimulates the cells of the cervix to secrete their own prostaglandins.

How does breast stimulation affect labour ?

Stimulation of breasts can produce very strong contractions. Hence, it is not advisable to practice it to initiate labour unless asked by the doctor to do so. Nipple stimulation can even reactivate a halted labour.

What will happen when I arrive at the Hospital ?

When you arrive at the hospital you will have to come to the Labour Ward. The doctor will then give you a full examination, which will include taking your blood pressure, pulse, examining your abdomen, and doing an internal examination. Your baby's heartbeat will also be monitored for a short while. The doctor will then decide the best way to induce labour.

What are the different ways in which labour may be induced ?

There are three ways to induce labour.

Using Pessaries :

A pessary / tablet or gel made of prostaglandins is inserted in your vagina. As mentioned earlier, prostaglandins helps in softening the cervix and stimulating uterine contractions. We usually begin the process of induction at midnight. This means that the first dose of Prostaglandin tablet will be inserted into the vagina at midnight. If your cervix is ripe, the pessary stimulates uterine contractions. If it is not, these pessaries will help soften the cervix and prepare it for the next stage.

The procedure of placing pessaries in your vagina may be repeated several times during the day till a result is achieved. Sometimes gel may be used in place of pessaries. The advantage of using pessaries or gels is that you can be mobile and can eat while waiting for labour to start.

This method is usually not enough all on its own and is used in combination with one or both of the other methods given below.

Artificial Rupture of Membranes (ARM)

ARM, also called breaking of waters, is an effective way of augmenting labour if the progress of labour slows down. You will be examined internally by a doctor and your waters will then be broken using an Amnion hook.

The procedure of breaking membranes is painless and is successful in starting labour in a majority of cases. Once the membranes are broken, the increased pressure on the cervix causes contractions to become much stronger.

If it does not, it may be necessary to go to the next stage, which is giving you Oxytocin.

Using Oxytocin :

This is a hormone that makes the contractions strong and regular. This method is usually combined with ARM. Although very safe, Oxytocin causes the contractions to be stronger and with shorter intervals between them as compared to those started by natural labour.

This may also be more painful and you may require some form of pain relief.

Mobility is restricted once Oxytocin is started as it is given in a drip into your arm. Once the Oxytocin I.V. drip is started, you and your baby will need careful monitoring.

Will my baby be safe during induction ?

Your baby's heartbeat will be monitored at regular intervals once labour is induced.

What if I go into labour during the night ?

Occasionally labour may start during the night. If this happens we will help to deliver your baby as if you had gone into labour without induction.

What if I don't go into labour ?

The doctor will discuss your progress with you throughout the day. You may need to have a rest and try again the next day. The further line of treatment will depend on your own particular case.

***For more details on Pain Relief During Labour
please ask for our Information Leaflet on the same.***