

Induction of Labor Information

What is an induction of labor?

Labor induction is the process of starting labor using medications or other methods.

Why is labor induction recommended?

Labor induction may be recommended if there are concerns for your baby or your well-being. This is called a medically necessary induction. Sometimes you may need a labor induction if your pregnancy goes beyond your due date and your labor does not start on its own. Sometimes patients may request labor induction at full term (after 39 weeks gestation). This is called an elective induction of labor. Your provider will discuss your individual risks and benefits with you. A plan can be made together with your provider.

How is labor induced?

Labor can be induced with medications such as misoprostol or pitocin, or with mechanical methods such as vaginal balloon catheter placement or artificial rupture of membranes. Decisions are made based on a cervical examination and patient and fetal well-being.

What happens if an induction of labor does not work?

Your provider will keep you informed of your labor progress. If you or your baby are not doing well, you may be recommended to have a cesarean section. An individualized plan will be made with you and your provider.

What are the risks of an induction of labor?

It is possible to have too many contractions and the uterus could be overstimulated. This would lead to reducing or stopping the medication in use. Prolonged induction may increase the risk of infection for you or your baby.

How long does an induction of labor take?

The length of time for labor induction is incredibly variable, and depends on many factors, including if you have already delivered a baby in the past, and the cervical examination. If the cervix is ready for labor, an induction may go more quickly. If a cervix is not ready for labor, the cervix has to be made ready before the labor contractions start. This may prolong the time from the start of the induction until the delivery of your baby. The active phase of labor is when the cervix is 6 cm dilated (the cervix needs to be 10 cm dilated to push out a baby). Getting to 6 cm dilated may take time.

How can I prepare for an induction of labor?

Talk with your provider about the process of induction of labor. Bring all the things you would like to have with you in the hospital until you deliver your baby and return home, including your baby's car seat. Once an induction is started, you will stay in the hospital until you have delivered, and you and your baby have recovered. There are times when the labor unit is very busy, and we may need to delay your scheduled induction. In this case, the delivering team will contact you to make arrangements for rescheduling your induction. Please note that our primary goal is to keep you and your baby safe.