



# STARTING YOUR INDUCTION Cervical Ripening

## What is an induction of labour?

An induction of labour is when your labour is started before it begins on its own. It involves different steps. The goal is to increase your chance of having a vaginal birth. In most cases, cervical ripening will be the first step.

## Why do I need an induction of labour?

The most common reason is that your pregnancy is 1-2 weeks past your due date. This is a post-dates induction. Other reasons may include:

- Your baby is not growing as expected or baby movements have slowed down
- Your water has broken before labour has started
- You have an infection
- You have a medical condition like high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease or heart problems.
- There is a problem with your placenta

*(Best Start & PCMCH, 2019)*

## What is cervical ripening and why may I need it?

Cervical ripening helps your cervix (lowest part of your uterus) get ready for labour, which increases your chance of having a vaginal birth.

## Helping you make an informed decision about cervical ripening.

Your health care provider will discuss the options you have. They may be different depending on your health, the health of your baby, the location of your placenta or the place you are planning to give birth.

## What are my options and how does cervical ripening work?

### Mechanical

Foley or balloon catheters are a common way to ripen a cervix. Your health care provider will insert a catheter through your cervix and fill the balloon with water. This works well when your cervix is open enough to fit the catheter through. The weight of the balloon helps your cervix open (just like your baby's head will later in labour). It can be uncomfortable to have the catheter inserted. You may have some cramping or contractions. Following insertion, you will experience very little discomfort. The catheter can be left in place for 24 hours. When your cervix is ripe, the balloon will fall out.

### Medications

Prostaglandins help your cervix get ready for labour. They can be given by mouth, put in your vagina or in your cervix. They work by causing contractions. Before they are given to you, your health care team will monitor you and your baby and will explain the procedure.

**Oral Misoprostol** is a pill that you take every 4 hours. **You will need to stay at the hospital if this method is chosen.** You may be given this medication up to 4 times

**Cervidil** is a prostaglandin medication that comes on a string like a tampon. The string is tucked up into your vagina. If you are having too many contractions your health care provider may instruct you to pull it out. The Cervidil can stay in for up to 24 hours. You may need more than one dose.

***If you have had a previous caesarean section, prostaglandins are not a safe choice for you***

Some people need more than one method of cervical ripening. A combination of these methods can be used. In some cases it can take 3-4 days.

The option to stay in the hospital or go home will depend on many factors. Some of them include: how you and your baby are coping with the cervical ripening, how many babies you have had before, how far away you live from the hospital and what type of method is being used.

***You don't always stay in the hospital until you give birth***

Going home may be the most comfortable option. In case you need to stay at the hospital, make sure to bring all the things you need for you and your support person such as: comfortable clothes, books, movies, tablet, etc.

### **My cervical ripening may not occur at the time it is booked because:**

- Other patients have more urgent medical needs
- The labour and birth unit is very busy
- All beds are occupied
- Many people may be booked for induction of labour on the same day; priority will be decided by the health care team

### **What if the cervical ripening does not work?**

If you and your baby are both healthy, you may be able to go home and come back in a day or two and try again. Not all inductions of labour will result in a vaginal birth; a caesarean birth may be needed. Your health care provider will discuss your options with you.

### **Websites for more information:**

- The MoTHERS Program [themothersprogram.ca](http://themothersprogram.ca)
- Best Start [en.beststart.org](http://en.beststart.org)
- Omama [omama.com](http://omama.com)
- SOGC Pregnancy Info [pregnancyinfo.ca](http://pregnancyinfo.ca)
- Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) [ontariomdiwives.ca](http://ontariomdiwives.ca)