

Healthier Communities,  
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Induction of labour

Information for patients



**The midwife or doctor you have seen for your antenatal care has arranged for you to have your labour induced. This leaflet provides you with information to help you prepare for this event**

**A midwife will contact you with a date and time to attend the maternity ward. Please make sure we have your current home/ mobile number to call.**

**All planned inductions of labour (IOL) are discussed on Mondays and Thursdays. If you have not been contacted within five days please call the Sherwood Birthing Unit on 01623 672244.**

## **What is induction of labour?**

**Labour is a natural process usually starting on its own between 37 and 42 weeks. Induction is the process of starting labour artificially.**

We know that induction of labour can lead to the need for stronger pain relief, and some women describe induction of labour as more painful than when labour starts on its own.

## **Why you might be offered induction**

**Labour is induced when it is thought that the outcome of the pregnancy will be better if labour is artificially started. A variety of clinical circumstances (you or your baby's health is of concern) the doctor may recommend earlier induction with a greater or lesser degree of urgency.**

The doctor will discuss the risks and benefits and alternative options. In normal pregnancies it is offered 12 days after your estimated due date.

After 42 weeks, induction is recommended as the placenta may be less efficient and complications are likely to develop for some babies (NICE 2008).

**Please bring** your pregnancy health records, hospital bag and refreshments (ensure you eat and drink regularly during your induction).

## **Day of induction**

**Please call the Sherwood Birthing Unit on 01623 672244 prior to leaving home to ensure your room is ready for your admission.**

Please come to the maternity ward reception. Partners are welcome to stay and each room has a reclining chair. We also have a fridge and microwave available for partners should they wish to bring microwave meals.

A midwife will do an antenatal check and monitor baby's heartbeat (electronic heart monitor) for 30 minutes. After this you'll need an internal examination to assess your cervix (neck of the womb).

## How is labour induced?

**A combination of the following three methods; some women need just one, some two, sometimes all three are used:**

### 1. Hormone pessary

A pessary (Propess) is inserted into your vagina (like a small tampon). It slowly releases an artificial hormone (prostaglandin) over 24 hours. The aim is to soften your cervix and stimulate contractions. You will be asked to lie on the bed for an hour after the pessary is inserted; baby's heartbeat will be monitored during this hour.



Afterwards you can move around as normal. You may feel backache or period type pains, but walking, having a bath, massage and aromatherapy can help. Tens machines and pain relief are available.

### 2. Breaking your waters

After 24 hours the Propess is removed and the midwife/doctor will assess your cervix. If it is softer and has started to open (dilate) it will be possible to break your waters. You will be transferred to the birthing unit to have this done. You may find regular contractions start soon after this. The midwife will listen to baby's heartbeat regularly and offer pain relief.

If your cervix has not changed enough to break your waters, other options will be discussed with you. Some women need a 2nd pessary to start labour.

### 3. Hormone drip (Syntocinon)

Once your waters have broken you may start to get contractions. If this doesn't happen the doctor will suggest that you have a hormone infusion (a drip) to start contractions. The drip will be put into your arm and the infusion started.

We recommend that your baby's heartbeat is monitored continuously using an electronic machine. The midwife will discuss your pain relief requirements with you.

## What happens when labour starts?

**If labour started during the 24 hours you may already be on the Sherwood Birthing Unit. If not, you will be transferred there to continue with the induction.**

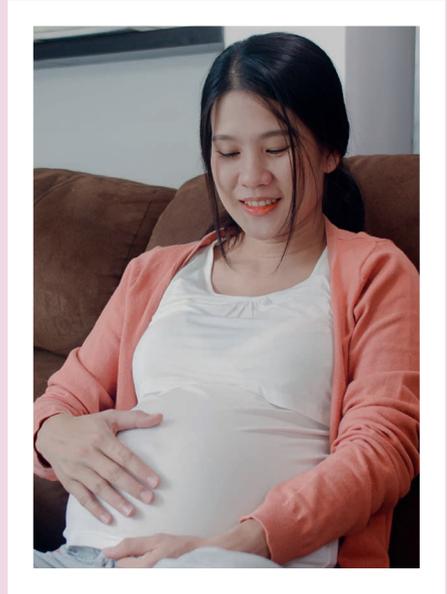
You will meet the midwife who will care for you in labour. Your midwife will discuss your birth plan and pain relief options with you. The midwife will also check on you and your baby regularly.

## How long will it take?

**It is difficult to know how long your induction and labour will take; it depends on which method of induction is used.**

For some women labour will start in the first 24 hours, for others it may take two to three days.

Occasionally the maternity unit is very busy which can lead to delays for induction. Staff will try to keep the delay to a minimum, and will keep you fully informed about when you can expect to have your labour induced.



## Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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