

FACT SHEET #7 INDUCTION OF LABOR AND ITS EFFECTS ON PRETERM BIRTH

WHAT DOES INDUCTION MEAN?

Induction is when a woman is admitted to the hospital for the purpose of starting her labor with medications. The process often starts with a gel to soften the cervix (prostaglandin), then medication (pitocin) by IV to start the contractions.

REASONS FOR INDUCTION:

- Medical reasons for starting labor with medications
 - Postdates – carrying the baby 1-2 weeks past the due date
 - Pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH)
 - Gestational diabetes with excessive-sized baby, or problems with the placenta
 - Rupture of membranes (ROM): When the membranes have ruptured but the mother feels no contractions, her labor may need to be artificially induced. Babies are at higher risk for developing sepsis (fever, infection) if the membranes are ruptured longer than 24 hours prior to birth
 - Any other fetal or maternal reasons that would make birth necessary

UNSUCCESSFUL INDUCTION

- Occurs when the mother's body does not respond to the above methods. If the mother is not close to 40 weeks gestation, prostaglandin may not be able to soften the cervix because it is not close enough to the natural time for delivery yet.
- May also occur when a woman's body has responded to the above methods, but the labor does not progress normally after it is started.
- If the membranes are still intact (have not been ruptured or broken), and if this is not an emergency situation, the mother could rest overnight and attempt induction again the next day. However, if induction was due to an emergency situation and failed, a Cesarean section would be necessary.

MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS THAT COULD LEAD TO AN UNNECESSARY CESAREAN DELIVERY

- Induction of labor before 39-40 weeks based solely on nonmedical reasons
 - Examples: Convenience, tax breaks, leaving for vacation, family coming to town
- Routine use of regional anesthesia (spinal, epidural, or caudal) for vaginal births

Sometimes inductions and c-sections are medically necessary and can save lives. Sometimes inductions are unsuccessful and lead to c-section. Women should never pressure their physician to help them to have their baby sooner than about 40 weeks,

as it could cause problems that they may have never considered. While the last trimester of pregnancy can be challenging, and the effects of the normal discomforts of pregnancy tiring, the best place for your baby is inside you. We can help prevent late preterm babies by being more aware of the reasons for and the effects of induction.

Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait!