

Home Cervical Ripening

You and your provider have decided to schedule an induction of labor. This is the process to start labor before it begins on its own. There may be a health reason, such as high blood pressure, or it can be done by choice. The goal in all cases is to have a vaginal birth.

To have a successful induction the first step will be to ripen (ready) the cervix. A ripe cervix is soft, thin and may be open. This can be done with medicine or a cervical dilator.

When medicine is used, you must stay in the hospital. These medicines can cause contractions and your baby must be monitored. Using a cervical dilator does not cause contractions, so it can be done at home. Your provider has decided that you are able to ripen the cervix at home.

The day before you are induced, you will have a clinic visit to place the dilators. They are small, matchstick size rods that are put within the opening of the cervix. As they absorb water they slowly begin to swell. This gently opens the cervix to get it ready for labor.

You may have some mild cramping or pain. This will go away soon after it is placed. Your baby is monitored for a short time after. You will go home until your scheduled induction time.

At home you can eat light meals and drink liquids. You can shower or bathe, but do not put anything in to your vagina (no sex, no douching). You may have some mild cramping and light spotting or blood-tinged mucous. Once the cervix opens, the dilator may fall out.

Insertion date/time _____

Number of rods placed _____

Number of gauze pads placed _____

Rods must be removed within 24 hours of being placed.

When to Call

Call right away if you have:

- Regular contractions
- Severe pain
- Rupture of membranes (your water breaks)
- Fever
- Less baby movement
- Heavy bleeding

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8180.