

Labor Induction: What to Expect

Labor induction is a medical procedure to start labor using medications or other methods. It is **safe and has been shown to not increase your risk of needing a cesarean section**. Your healthcare provider may recommend induction when the benefits of delivering your baby outweigh the risks of continuing the pregnancy, but it is also an option electively for certain patients.

Methods of Induction

MEDICATIONS

- **Prostaglandins (misoprostol)** — Placed vaginally or taken by mouth to soften and open the cervix
- **Oxytocin (Pitocin)** — Given through an IV to start contractions

MECHANICAL

- **Balloon catheter** — A small tube with a balloon inserted into the cervix and filled with water to help it open
- **Artificial rupture of membranes** — Your provider breaks the amniotic sac to progress labor

We will often combine methods — such as a balloon catheter with medication — to help labor progress more effectively.

Pain Management

Most Effective

Epidural

Can be administered at any time during the induction process; minimal effects on fetus or labor progress

Moderate

IV / IM Medications

Short-acting; typically avoided in active labor due to fetal effects

Mild–Moderate

Nitrous Oxide

Breathed through a mask you control; minimal fetal effects

Non-Medication

Natural Methods

Breathing, relaxation, massage, position changes

typically

12–24 hrs

How long does induction take?

The time from induction to delivery varies for each person. Your timeline depends on whether this is your first baby, the condition of your cervix, and which induction method is used.

Questions to Ask

- Q Why is induction recommended for me?
- Q What are the risks and benefits of induction in my specific situation?
- Q Which induction method will be used?
- Q How long should I expect the process to take?
- Q What happens if induction doesn't work?
- Q When is a cesarean section recommended?

What to Bring & Expect

- Plan to stay in the hospital throughout the induction process
- Bring comfortable items from home (pillow, music, chargers, etc.)
- Two support people can stay with you
- You will be monitored regularly with fetal heart rate and contraction monitors
- The induction process is typically started and managed by our resident team but your doctor will be updated throughout the process and will be present for delivery



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