

## Maternity information factsheet

# Induction of labour: Cervical ripening balloon catheter

This factsheet contains important information about having a cervical ripening balloon catheter to help induce labour. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

### What is induction of labour?

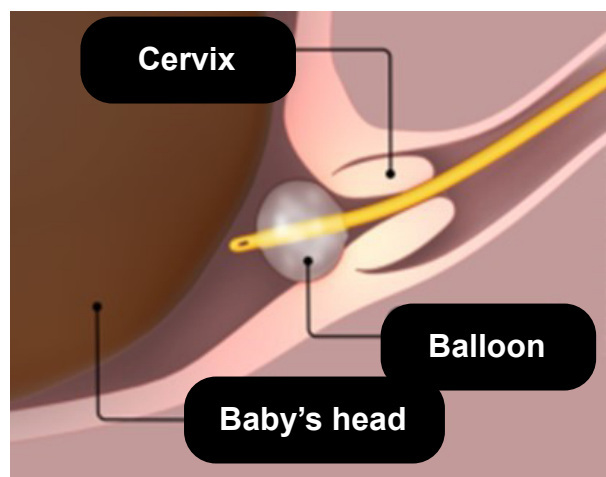
Labour is a natural process which usually starts between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy. It is sometimes necessary to start the process of labour artificially. This is known as induction of labour. Induction of labour is only recommended when it is thought it will benefit the health of you or your baby. It may be beneficial to induce your labour if:

- you are overdue
- there are concerns about the wellbeing of you or your baby
- your waters break before your labour starts

Your midwife will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of induction of labour with you and answer any questions you may have.

### What is a cervical ripening balloon catheter?

A cervical ripening balloon catheter is an induction method used to soften and open your cervix (neck of your womb) to help start labour. The procedure involves a midwife inserting a catheter (a soft silicone tube) into your cervix during a vaginal examination. The catheter has a small balloon at the end of it, which is filled with a sterile saline (salt water solution) and is left in place for up to 24 hours.



### How does a cervical ripening balloon catheter work?

When inflated, the balloon will place gentle pressure on your cervix. This will cause a natural hormone called prostaglandin to be released. The prostaglandin will cause your cervix to soften and open in preparation for labour. The procedure can either start labour or allow us to break your waters artificially.

## Are there any risks?

The main risk of this procedure is that a catheter can sometimes allow bacteria to enter your body, which can cause an infection. For this procedure, the risk is very small, and we will monitor you after the procedure to assess the wellbeing of you and your baby. If we suspect you have an infection, we may advise changing your birth plan.

If you go home after the procedure, it is important that you know what to look out for. Signs of an infection include:

- feeling generally unwell
- a high temperature (38°C or above)
- feeling cold and shivery

If you experience any of the symptoms above, call the 24-hour maternity triage line immediately on **0300 123 9001**.

## How should I prepare for the procedure?

No preparation is needed for this procedure.

## What will happen during the procedure?

We will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have. We will then ask you for your consent to proceed.

We will then perform a vaginal examination to assess your cervix and determine whether a cervical ripening balloon catheter is a suitable induction method for you. If we feel it is, we will gently insert a catheter into your cervix. We will then slowly inflate the small balloon. This may feel slightly uncomfortable, but it should not be painful. You may experience some strong cramping after we insert the balloon, but this should ease after a few hours. Once inflated, we will secure the catheter to the inside of your thigh using a catheter strap and leave it in place for up to 24 hours.

## What will happen after the procedure?

We will admit you to our antenatal ward or, if we feel you are suitable for an outpatient induction of labour, you will be able to go home with the catheter in place. If you go home, you will need to come back into hospital the next day to have the catheter removed. We will give you an appointment time to return the next day before you leave hospital.

You will be able to bathe and shower as normal, but you may find it easier to remove the catheter strap first. You should avoid doing any exercise, other than walking, while the catheter is in place.

If the procedure causes labour to start, the balloon will fall out naturally.

If the procedure doesn't cause labour to start within 24 hours, we will deflate the balloon and remove it. We will then discuss your options, including alternative methods of induction, with you and answer any questions you may have.

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## Are there any potential complications?

Occasionally, we may need to remove the balloon before it falls out if:

- we have any concerns about your baby's movements or heart rate
- you are unwell and we suspect you have an infection
- you experience ongoing vaginal bleeding
- your waters break
- your contractions start

If you experience any of the above while at home, or you have any concerns, call the 24-hour maternity triage line immediately on **0300 123 9001**.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having this procedure, please contact the 24-hour maternity triage line via the Healthier together app or call **0300 123 9001**.

## Useful links

[www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/labour-and-birth/signs-of-labour/inducing-labour](http://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/labour-and-birth/signs-of-labour/inducing-labour)

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Pregnancyandbirth/What-to-expect-in-the-early-stage-of-labour-1035-PIL..pdf](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Pregnancyandbirth/What-to-expect-in-the-early-stage-of-labour-1035-PIL..pdf)

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