

WHAT DOES INDUCTION MEAN?

Induction is when the doctor gives a woman medicine to make her start labor. Often it starts with a gel called prostaglandin to make the cervix soft. The cervix is the bottom of the uterus that opens up to let the baby out. The other medicine used for induction is called pitocin. It is given by an IV and it makes the uterus contract.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS TO HAVE AN INDUCTION?

Your provider may want to start your labor for medical reasons, including:

- If you are 1 to 2 weeks *past* your due date.
- If you have severe pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH). PIH is high blood pressure caused by pregnancy.
- If you have gestational diabetes, and your baby grows to be very large.
- If you have problems with the placenta. The placenta grows in your uterus and provides the baby with food and oxygen. If the placenta can't feed the baby, the baby will stop growing.
- If the membranes around the placenta break, but there are no contractions. This can cause a fever and a blood infection in the baby if the membranes are broken longer than 24 hours before birth.

DOES INDUCTION ALWAYS WORK?

No. Unsuccessful inductions happen when the woman's body does not respond to the medications, or when the woman's body responds to the medicine and labor starts, but the labor doesn't move the baby down the birth canal. If the induction doesn't work, sometimes the woman can rest and try again the next day if the membranes around the baby are not broken and the woman's and the baby's health are not in danger.

WHAT ABOUT INDUCTION AND C-SECTIONS?

Sometimes an unsuccessful induction can cause a woman to have a c-section because:

- Labor is induced too early, before 39 to 40 weeks of pregnancy.
- She's had regional anesthesia (painkillers injected into the spinal area) for several vaginal births in the past.
- The medications haven't worked and the baby needs to be delivered.

A cesarean section (also called c-section) is when a baby is born through a cut that the doctor makes in the mother's belly and uterus. If an induction is unsuccessful, it may be necessary to get the baby out by cesarean delivery.

WHY SHOULD YOU AVOID UNNECESSARY INDUCTIONS AND C-SECTIONS?

Sometimes inductions and c-sections are done for medical reasons and can save lives. Sometimes, though, women may want to induce labor or have a c-section for non-medical reasons like convenience, tax breaks, vacation plans or family schedules. A woman should never pressure her provider to help her have her baby earlier than about 40 weeks (full-term). The last few weeks of pregnancy can be uncomfortable for the mother. But staying pregnant until the baby is full-term is best, unless there are medical reasons that make it unsafe for the mother or baby.