

October 2, 2020

**Cervical Ripening**

We look forward to participating in this special time with you. Your provider has planned cervical ripening for you as part of your induction. We hope that this information sheet will help you understand and prepare for cervical ripening. Your provider will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**What is Cervical Ripening?**

* Your provider may have planned an induction of labor for you. This means the plan to bring on labor before it starts on its own. In this case cervical ripening may be recommended if your cervix is not already sufficiently open.
* Cervical ripening will help the cervix (the opening of the uterus) to soften and to open, in preparation for vaginal birth. Your provider will decide if you need cervical ripening after an exam at your prenatal visit.
* Cervical ripening is usually scheduled the day before your induction.
* Multiple doses of cervical ripening are often needed, sometimes over a couple of days.

**How Do Doctors Do Cervical Ripening?**

* **Pharmacologic method:**  Medications can be used to open and soften the cervix.  
  -**Cyotec (Misoprotosol):** This is a pill that you will take orally. Sometimes the medication is given vaginally. Cyotec is a man made prostaglandin used to ripen the cervix (Prostagladins are substances that occur naturally in the body, to help with cervical ripening and other changes during labor).  
  -**Cervidil (Dinoprostone):** This is a prostaglandin insert. Your provider will place it in your vagina. It can remain inserted for up to 12 hours.
* **Mechanical Method:  
  -Cervical Ripening Balloon:** This is a soft tube that your doctor will insert into the vagina, up through your cervix. There is a balloon at the tip of the tube, which will be inflated with fluid. This will open the cervix. It is left in the cervix for up to 12 hours.

**Scheduling Your Cervical Ripening**

* The cervical ripening appointment can be made up to a week in advance. Please schedule your cervical ripening appointment with our office. We will give you a date and time.
* On the day of your appointment, please call the Labor and Delivery Unit at 617-732-4805 just before leaving home. We can never predict how many patients will be on the labor unit at any given time. If the labor unit is full at that time, we may need to delay or reschedule your appointment. We do this for your safety and for all our patients' safety. If we need to reschedule, we will plan the next steps with you.

**What to Bring With You**

* Please bring anything that will make you feel comfortable during your stay. Many people bring pillows, cellular phones, reading material or laptops.
* You may plan ahead and pack the rest of your belongings. For example, a suitcase with a changes of clothes, toiletries, cameras and other items you will need on the postpartum unit, after giving birth. But please leave those items in your car for later.

**Before You Come to the Hospital**

* It is very helpful to get a goodnight's sleep.
* You may eat and drink as usual.
* You may take your prescribed medications if any. Your provider will let you know if you should do anything different.

**Day of Your Cervical Ripening**

* **Arriving at the hospital**After calling ahead and confirming your appointment time, plan to arrive at the hospital 15 -30 minutes before your scheduled time. Please go to the hospital's Main Entrance, 75 Francis St. Check into the Obstetrical Admitting office, located under the escalators in the hospital's main lobby. If you plan to drive to the hospital, valet parking is available. There is also a self-park parking garage. (Valet is less expensive Monday through Friday, the garage is less expensive on weekends and holidays). The admitting clerk will go with you to the Center for Labor and Birth, located in the CWN building, CWN-5 lobby. The CWN-5 receptionist will check you in. A nurse will take you into a private area, to talk with you alone. Your significant other/support people will remain in the lobby at this time. The check-in should take only 5 to 10 minutes.
* **If you will take Cyotec (Misoprostol) you will go to a Triage room:**-Triage rooms are small private roomsused for short stays or for evaluation. These rooms are smaller than our birthing rooms. At this time, your support person must wait in the lobby or the car. Triage rooms may or may not have a television, so you may find your stay more enjoyable If you have some form of entertainment (book, magazine, laptop, etc.).  
  -In that room, a nurse will take your vital signs (blood pressure, temperature, pulse...).  
  -Your provider may examine your cervix the day of your appointment  
  -The nurse will connect you to a monitor that will track the baby's heartbeat. They will monitor the baby's heartbeat for at least 20 minutes before you receive the medication.  
  -You will take Cyotec by mouth (2 very small pills). OR the provider will insert Cyotec into the vagina.  
  -The monitor that tracks the baby's heartbeat will remain on for at least one hour after you receive medication. Your provider will decide if one dose is enough, or if you need additional doses. When the monitor is removed, you are free to go.  
  -If you need only one dose, you may go home once the nurse removes the monitor.  
  -If you need to receive more than one dose of medication, the nurse will give it to you every 4 hours. You will need to be on the fetal monitor again for 20 minutes prior to receiving any additional Cytotec doses. We ask that you return to the Admitting Office 30 minutes before your next dose.
* **If you will do a Cervical Ripening Balloon, you may go into a birthing room:**- A nurse will take your vital signs(blood pressure, temperature, pulse...).  
  - The nurse will connect your belly to a monitor that will track the baby's heartbeat. They will monitor the baby's heartbeat for at least 20 minutes before the balloon placement.  
  - Your provider will insert a soft tube into the vagina and the cervix during a pelvic examination. Then the tip of the balloon will be inflated with fluid.  
  -Once the balloon has successfully opened your cervix, the tube and balloon usually exit the vagina spontaneously. If this has not occurred after 12 hours, your provider may choose to remove it by deflating the balloon.  
  -The Cervical Ripening Balloon may also be used in conjunction with Pitocin or Cytotec.  
  -Sometimes the balloon is used as part of an outpatient protocol, in which case we will send you home with the catheter and a plan for follow up.