

# **LABOR INDUCTION**

A pregnant woman goes into labor before the birth of her baby. Sometimes labor is slow to begin or progress. In these cases, medications or other methods may be used to bring on (induce) labor. This is called labor induction. If keeping a pregnancy going is more of a risk than delivering the baby, then labor may be induced. Some of the methods used to induce labor also can speed up labor if it is going to slowly. Labor is induced in up to 15% of pregnant women in the United States. This pamphlet will explain:

- Why labor may be induced
- How it is done
- What risks are involved

## **About Labor**

- Most babies are born between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy. Very few babies are born on their due dates.

## **What is Labor Induction?**

- Doctors may use medication or other methods to induce (bring on) labor. This may need to be done before the woman's body begins labor on its own. Labor is induced to cause a pregnant woman's cervix to open (dilate) and thin out (efface) to prepare for the vaginal birth of her baby. More than one method of labor induction is used.
- For some women, labor induction is not a good choice. Your doctor will discuss what is the best method for you.

## **Why May It Be Done?**

- Labor may be induced if the health of the woman or baby is at risk.

Whether your labor will be induced depends on the condition of you and your baby, how far along the pregnancy is, the status of your cervix, and other factors. Labor may be induced if certain conditions that affect the woman or baby occur. Following are examples of conditions that may be a reason for inducing labor:

- Your pregnancy is postterm (more than 42 weeks).
- You have high blood pressure caused by your pregnancy.
- You have health problems that could harm you or your baby.
- You have an infection in the uterus (chorioamnionitis).
- You have abruption placenta (the placenta has begun to separate from the inner wall of the uterus before the baby is born).
- You have premature rupture of membranes (your water has broken).

## **Some Reasons Labor Should Not Be Induced Include:**

- You have placenta previa (the placenta lies very low in the uterus, so that the opening of the uterus is partially or completely covered).
- The baby is lying in a transverse position (across your uterus rather than head down).

- The umbilical cord has prolapsed (it dropped down in the vagina ahead of the baby).
- You have had some types of surgery on your uterus.

#### **How Is It Done?**

- Stripping the Membranes
- Rupturing the Amniotic Sac
- Ripening or Dilating the Cervix
- Oxytocin
- Prostaglandin Agents

#### **Finally...**

For some women, having the baby is safer than continuing the pregnancy. Your labor may be induced if you have not started labor on your own. There are a number of methods your doctor may choose to induce labor.

\* Please see brochure in link