

How to Get Your Labour Going – Yourself!

If, after discussion with your caregiver, you have decided you want to try to get your labour going, there are many methods you can try. The most common ones are listed below. Most of them have not been studied, but have been used by many women over the years who report them to have been effective. Of course we cannot know if these women would have gone into labour anyway!

If there is a medical reason to induce labour (high blood pressure, concerns regarding your baby's well-being), the best and safest methods of induction are medical, and offered by your caregivers in a hospital setting. It may be safe to try the methods below first, but talk to your caregiver before you do.

Preventing Post-term Pregnancy

- stay active – walk, swim, do yoga
- don't gain too much weight
- continue regular sexual activity throughout pregnancy
- eat pineapple, figs and dates (no science behind this, but many women says it's effective!)
- relax and enjoy yourself – try not to focus on dates and times

Fun and Easy Ways to Get Labour Started

- walk up and downhill – briskly!
- watch funny movies and laugh! (now that's easy!)
- visit with and if possible hold a newborn baby
- sexual stimulation – breast/nipple stimulation, clitoral stimulation, or just plain old sex; the point is to get the woman's hormone levels up, by creating a state of sexual arousal, and orgasm(s) if possible; NOTE: DO NOT HAVE INTERCOURSE OR PUT ANYTHING IN YOUR VAGINA IF YOUR WATERS ARE BROKEN. If you're not sure, check first.

“Natural” Approaches to Getting Labour Going

- **mother's cordial:** a herbal tincture you can start taking at 36 weeks gestation; it does not induce labour, but prepares and tones the uterus; most naturopaths make a mother's cordial
- **evening primrose oil:** take 2-4 caps per day orally, and/or insert 2-3 caps into your vagina, as high as you can comfortably reach with your fingers, at night before bed; evening primrose oil is thought to contain a prostaglandin-like substance that encourages your cervix to soften and thin out
- **labour preparation teas:** these are available at health food stores; their effectiveness is unknown
- **cervical stimulation or “stretch and sweep”** – this is offered by many caregivers as a regular part of pregnancy care; it involves a vaginal exam, during which the cervix is stimulated; if possible, a finger is inserted into the cervix, and the outside of the membranes or waterbag that are holding the baby are separated from the inside of the cervix, which causes the release of prostaglandin, which helps the cervix to “ripen” (thin, soften and begin to dilate)
- **aromatherapy:** use clary sage essential oil in grapeseed or almond oil and massage your abdomen in a clockwise direction (down the left and up the right) for 5-10 minutes twice a day
- **shiatsu or acupressure - spleen 6:** spleen 6 is located four fingerbreadths above your ankle bone on the shin bone of the inside of your leg; press in and toward the front of your leg; the spot will be quite tender; apply hard pressure on both sides 3-5 minutes at a time
- **acupuncture:** there are several acupuncture points that are known to stimulate labour
- **chiropractic adjustments:** several chiropractic adjustments to back, hips and pelvis can help
- **castor oil compress:** heat castor oil in a glass jar immersed in hot water or in a microwave; soak a flannel or soft cloth in the warm castor oil and place it on the lower half of your abdomen; cover with a towel and put a hot water bottle or heating pad over top; it should feel just comfortably warm, not hot; leave it on for an hour or two (while you watch a movie or read a book)