

When your waters break before labour starts (pre-labour rupture of membranes)

Department of Maternity Services

Information for Patients

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This advice is for women who are 37 or more weeks pregnant, not high risk and their waters have broken but labour has not started.

What does this mean?

For some people, the waters break (membranes rupture) before the start of labour. This is not unusual and most of the time labour starts soon after.

6 in 10 people will go into labour within 24 hours of their waters breaking. If you are not already in labour and do not go into labour, your midwives and doctors will offer to start your labour (induction of labour) as soon as possible or 24 hours after your waters break.

Why does this matter?

Your baby is in a protective sac of fluid in the womb. When your waters break, it means the sac now has a hole in it that lets the water drain away. This will carry on until the baby is born.

The sac that surrounds your baby in the womb helps protect your baby from infection. The risk of your baby getting an infection increases slightly the longer you wait for labour to start.

The risk of your baby getting a serious infection is 1 in 100 rather than 1 in 200 for women whose waters have not broken.

Your baby is also more likely to have antibiotics and be admitted to the neonatal unit if your waters broke more than 48 hours before your baby is born.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What will happen next?

You will be offered to start your labour either as soon as possible or within 24 hours after your waters have broken. Waiting 24 hours gives you the best chance of going into labour on your own. If you would like to be induced as soon as possible, we will arrange this but it depends on how busy the maternity unit is at the time.

If your waters have been leaking for longer than 24 hours **before labour**, your baby must be closely monitored for signs of infection for at least 12 hours after the birth of your baby.

If I decide to wait what should I do when I am at home?

You should get plenty of rest and eat and drink normally whilst you wait for labour to start. You can take a bath or shower at home as this does not raise the risk of infection. You should not have sexual intercourse as this can increase your risk of infection.

It is important that you contact us straight away if you have any of the following as they **may be signs of infection and your baby may need to be delivered sooner**:

- The colour of water changes to yellow or green or has an offensive smell
- You feel unwell, hot, shivery, or sweaty
- You have a temperature over 37.5 degrees centigrade

It is also important you contact us if:

- You lose any blood other than your mucous plug "show"
- You feel your baby's movements change
- You have sharp pains that are there all the time
- You are worried at all

There is someone available to answer your call 24 hours a day - please contact us if you are worried at all:

Maternity Assessment Unit LRI : 0116 258 6312

Maternity Assessment Unit LGH : 0116 258 4808

St. Marys Birth Centre : 01664 8544 854 (if you are booked to have your baby there)

Place of birth

- If you decide to have your labour induced straight away, or
 - if your waters have been broken for more than 24 hours before your labour starts,
- you will be advised to have your baby on the delivery suite at Leicester Royal Infirmary or General Hospital, so you and your baby can be closely monitored.

What will happen if I decide to have my labour induced?

If you decide to have your labour induced we will discuss this with you and give you the induction of labour information leaflet. Leaflet 328 [What to expect if we need to start your labour \(induction\)](#) available here: yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/

Choices of pain relief

If your labour is induced with a hormone (oxytocin) drip, you will have a choice of pain relief such as

- paracetamol or dihydrocodeine,
- pethidine injection,
- gas and air (Entonox) or
- epidural.

It is not possible to use the birthing pool when an oxytocin drip is used.

Your midwife will talk to you about the best type of pain relief for the stage in the induction process you are in.

What will happen when my baby is born?

If the time between your waters breaking and your labour starting is

- 24 hours or more,
- or there is 48 hours or more from your waters breaking to your baby being born,

you will be advised that your baby has checks in hospital every 4 hours for at least the first 12 hours of age.

When you have been discharged home, please check your baby for any signs of infection:

- High temperature
- Low temperature
- Poor feeding
- “Grunting” sound when breathing
- Difficulty breathing
- Jaundice (yellow discolouration of the skin or whites of the eyes)

If you are at all concerned that there are any of these signs of infection you should take your baby to the Children’s Emergency Department.



Induction of labour appointment

If you do not go into labour within 24 hours, an appointment has been booked for you on:

Date :

Time :

Please call to confirm before setting off

Department of :

Contact details :

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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