

# Inducing labour

Information for the public

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## Inducing labour: the care you should expect

Labour is a natural process that usually starts on its own. Sometimes it needs to be started artificially: this is called 'induced labour'. About a third of women in the UK have their labour induced. This is often because they are overdue, or their waters have broken but labour has not started. Inducing labour can be the best option if there are health risks to the mother or baby of continuing the pregnancy. But it may affect other choices women have made, like where they give birth and their options during the birth, so it is important that all women can choose for themselves whether to have an induction.

We want this guideline to make a difference to women who may have their labour induced, and their babies, partners and families, by making sure:

- better information and support is given in pregnancy to help women understand their birth options and when induction of labour might be offered
- the benefits and risks of inducing labour are explained clearly, including how it might affect the woman's personal choices about giving birth
- women know they can choose not to have their labour induced, and what this means for their care.

## Making informed decisions

Decisions about treatment and care are best made when all the choices available, and all the possible outcomes, have been discussed. Your care team should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. This includes explaining how your labour will be induced if you choose this (this can be done either by giving medicines that can help start labour, or by using medical equipment), and telling you why some options may not be right for you (for example, some medicines shouldn't be used if you've previously had a caesarean birth).

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to having your labour induced that worry you more than others?
- How will induction of labour affect you and your baby?
- What happens if you decide not to have your labour induced?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, ask your care team.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about inducing labour.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Birth Trauma Association](#), [enquiries@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk)
- [National Childbirth Trust \(NCT\)](#), 0300 33 00 700

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with women who have had their labour induced and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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