



## **Outpatient Balloon Ripening**

You and your provider have planned for an induction of labor. Induction of labor means doing something to get your body into labor before it begins on its own.

Common reasons for recommending an induction include medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure or going a week past your due date.

Induction of labor can be a slow process, lasting up to 3 days. The first part of an induction is to get the cervix to be ripe, or ready for labor. A cervix is ready for labor when it is soft, thin (effaced) and maybe a few centimeters open (dilated). This increases the chance of a vaginal birth.

The next step is to get your body into active labor. This can be done with a medicine called oxytocin (or Pitocin) that is given in an IV, breaking the bag of water, or both.

Mechanical ripening (stretching the inside of the cervix open) can safely be done at home.

Mechanical ripening is most commonly done with a balloon catheter. This is a soft rubber or plastic tube with an inflatable balloon at its tip. When filled with fluid, the balloon applies gentle pressure to the inner part of the cervix. This works to ripen the cervix by gradually opening the cervix a few centimeters. Stretching the cervix open can also release natural prostaglandins, hormones that help ripen the cervix.

### **What should I expect?**

You will schedule an appointment to have the balloon catheter placed in OB Triage. After it is placed, you will go home for 12-24 hours.

Your physician will gently guide the catheter through the natural hole in the cervix and fill the balloon just inside the cervix and outside the bag of water. This may be done with a speculum.

You may have some cramping and discomfort when the Foley catheter is placed, but most people find it resolves shortly after the procedure is over. Once it is in place, you may not feel it at all, or it may feel like a tampon. You can walk, shower, bathe, and use the bathroom as usual with it in place. In the unlikely event that you experience heavy vaginal bleeding or your bag of water breaks at the time of the placement you would be admitted to Labor and Delivery right away.

After placement, you will go home and will be called to go to the hospital in about 12-24 hours for your induction.

### **Normal Effects at Home**

You will likely notice some bloody show (blood-tinged mucous). You may also continue to have some mild-moderate cramping from the prostaglandins that are being stimulated as your body gets ready for labor. Once the cervix is open enough, the balloon catheter may fall out. Often people feel cramping when the balloon passes through the cervix into the vagina, after which the feeling tends to fade. If you can feel the balloon in your vagina, you may remove and discard it.

Complications are extremely rare.

If you have any questions, please talk to your OB provider!