



What can I do to avoid induction of labour?

Normal labour occurs any time after 37 weeks of pregnancy & will start when your baby is ready to be born. Most obstetricians advise induction about 10 - 14 days after your due date to avoid risks to your baby & complications in labour, but if you don't want an induction discuss it with them. You *do* have the right to refuse but be guided by their advice. Although it can be very frustrating to go overdue, don't rush to upset this natural process – please don't ask a complementary therapist to try to start your labour, as inappropriate attempts to induce contractions can cause complications for you or your baby.

So what can *you* do to encourage labour to start naturally? Sex – if you feel like it - triggers release of hormones to stimulate contractions & nipple massage also produces oxytocin which makes your uterus contract. *After 37 weeks* of pregnancy, gently massage your nipples for 5 minutes a day – one at a time. Massage or reflexology can relax you & get you through the last few weeks. Aromatherapy oils such as lavender & ylang ylang may also help, but don't use them in the bath once your waters have broken. *After 37 weeks*, finger stimulation of an acupuncture point on the inside of your leg may aid softening of your cervix ready for labour. You'll find the point 3 fingers above your inner ankle bone (it will feel tender) – press intermittently 20-30 times, twice daily, but *don't* do this if you have any medical or pregnancy complications, if you've previously had a Caesarean or are booked to have one this time. Homeopathic remedies must be prescribed individually so don't be tempted to use a remedy your friend used because this may not be correct for you. Some mums have heard of homeopathic caulophyllum to start labour but if used inappropriately this can cause excessively strong contractions or, conversely, slow down a labour which is already established - it's best to consult a qualified homeopath. Raspberry leaf tea is thought to tone your uterus to work efficiently in labour. Start with 1 cup a day from about 32 weeks of pregnancy, increasingly gradually to a maximum of 4 cups a day. You can also sip the tea during labour. Avoid raspberry leaf if you've had a previous Caesarean or need one this time, if you've had any bleeding, premature labour or a previous labour which lasted less than 4 hours, if you're expecting twins or have had IVF treatment. Traditional remedies to start labour eg drinking castor oil or having an enema are *not recommended*

A word of caution: Induction of labour is a medical procedure for a specific medical reason. Only a doctor or midwife can assess whether or not it is safe & appropriate to induce labour. Always inform your midwife or doctor if you're considering natural remedies or complementary therapies to try starting labour. Do not ask a complementary practitioner to try getting you into labour, unless they are a midwife or doctor or have discussed your situation with your midwife.

Leaflet written by Denise Tiran, Expectancy's Director, and intended as a general guide only