Patient Information Leaflet

Maternity Services

Outpatient Induction of Labour
What is induction of labour?

Induction of labour (IOL) is the process for starting labour artificially. Nearly 20% of births in the UK are induced. The main reason for inducing labour is that the pregnancy has gone past the expected due date. Here in Barnsley we would suggest an induction of labour if you go 12 days over your expected date. There may be other reasons why your obstetrician may recommend an induction of labour. It is recommended when the obstetricians feel that continuing with your pregnancy could be bad for either yourself or your unborn baby.

Induction of labour is done in the hospital and takes a minimum of 24 hours (often longer); however some women may be allowed home for part of the process. This is called an outpatient induction of labour. This leaflet gives you the information you will need to make a decision about whether to stay in hospital for the whole process or whether to spend some time at home.

Who can have an outpatient induction of labour?

You will be offered the choice of an outpatient induction of labour if:

• It is your first baby.
• Your pregnancy is low risk. This means that you are only having one baby, your
pregnancy has been uncomplicated and you have no medical or health problems.

- You are 12 days over your expected due date – outpatient induction of labour may be considered when you reach 40 weeks but only if:
  - You are aged over 40 but have no other complications.
  - You are suffering from symphasis pubis dysfunction (a condition affecting the pelvis which causes pain and discomfort).
- You have access to a telephone at all times.
- You have a good understanding of English language.
- You have transport to bring you to the hospital.
- You live within 30 minutes of the hospital.
- You have someone to stay with you at home.

If you do not fit these criteria you will still be offered an induction of labour but it will be recommended that you stay in hospital during the process.

Your midwife will discuss your induction of labour with you and if you fit the criteria you will be given the option of an outpatient induction. This will usually be done when the midwife sees you at 41 weeks to perform a sweep of your cervix (an internal examination
in which the midwife or doctor places a finger just inside the cervix and uses a sweeping motion to separate the membranes from the cervix).

**What happens on the day of your induction?**

Your midwife or doctor will arrange a date for you to attend the Barnsley Birthing Centre for your induction of labour.

You will be asked to attend at 07.00hrs (please bring your hand-held maternity records and an overnight bag just in case you need to stay in hospital).

**Step-1**

On arrival you will be cared for by a midwife who will:

- Discuss the process for induction and answer any questions you may have.
- Check your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and test your urine.
- Examine your tummy to check the baby’s size and position.

Your baby’s heart rate will be monitored for 30 minutes and if everything is alright the midwife will perform an internal examination (vaginal examination) to check the neck of the womb (cervix). If the neck of the womb is closed you will be given a labour inducing drug called Propess. The drug is in the shape of a small flat tampon and
is inserted into the vagina. The idea is that it remains in your vagina and slowly releases a drug over the next 24 hours that will act upon the neck of your womb to soften and dilate it. It may be enough to send you in to labour yourself.

The string from the Propess will lie just outside your vagina so it is important that you do not pull or drag on it when you:

- Wipe yourself after going to the toilet.
- After washing yourself.
- When getting on and off the bed.

You will be asked to remain on your bed for a further 30 minutes.

Your midwife will check that everything is alright with you and your baby 1 hour and 2 hours after the insertion of the Propess by recording your observations (blood pressure, temperature, pulse rate), listening to your baby’s heart beat and monitoring any contractions you may be feeling.

**Step-2**

You will be allowed home after the second check at 2 hours if you and your baby are alright and your risk factors have not changed.

Before you leave you will be given the opportunity to ask the midwife any questions.

You can continue with your normal day to
day activities and eat and drink as normal. You may be more comfortable if you stay close to home. Long journeys or prolonged trips are not advisable.

**What to expect at home**

The Propess works by “ripening” your cervix – this means the cervix softens, shortens and begins to open up. You may experience period like pain and tightenings. Sometimes the Propess may actually start you off in labour in which case the tightenings or contractions will become progressively stronger and closer together.

**You must contact the Birthing Centre if:**

- You are experiencing regular painful contractions (every 5 minutes) or your contractions suddenly become very painful and frequent (every couple of minutes) or you have constant abdominal pain.
- You have any bleeding.
- You think your waters have broken.
- You are not happy with your baby’s movements.
- You feel unwell in yourself.
- The Propess falls out (do not attempt to replace the Propess – but note the time it came out if you can).

**Step-3**

You will be asked to return to the Birthing Centre the same evening – 12 hours after the Propess was inserted for another check
on your own and your baby’s wellbeing. Your observations will be recorded and a tracing of your baby’s heart rate will be performed. The midwife will also ask about any contractions or tightenings you may be having.

If everything is alright you will be allowed back home.

**Step-4**

If you do not go into labour yourself during the night you will return to the Birthing Centre the following morning for removal of the Propess and assessment. If it is possible to break your waters this will be done when a bed is available on the Birthing Centre (this may be straight away or you may have to wait – it will depend upon how many other women are in labour at that time). If it is not possible to break your waters you will be seen by the doctor who may suggest a further dose of a labour inducing gel called Prostin. It is not advisable for you to go home when this has been administered.

**Further information and advice can be obtained by contacting the following:**

Barnsley Birthing Centre: 01226 432249

Antenatal / Postnatal ward: 01226 432242 / 432244
References:


If you need this information in an alternative format, please contact the Patient Advice and Complaints Team on 01226 432330.