

YOUR CHOICE: SPONTANEOUS LABOR OR LABOR INDUCTION?

A decision aid for pregnant people with no medical reason for labor induction

WHAT IS SPONTANEOUS LABOR?

Spontaneous labor starts on its own and is powered by your body and your baby. It is most likely to happen between 37 and 42 weeks.

IS IT NORMAL TO GO PAST MY DUE DATE?

YES!

Without intervention...

50% people still pregnant at 40 weeks and 5 days

25% people still pregnant at 41 weeks and 3 days

10% people still pregnant at 42 weeks

Having a longer pregnancy is more likely if this is your first birth, you are older, or you have had other longer pregnancies.¹

WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

1

Wait for labor to start on its own

2

Schedule an induction between 41-42 weeks

3

Request an induction between 39-41 weeks

WHAT IS LABOR INDUCTION?

Labor induction is when a care provider tries to start your labor with a cervical balloon or medicines instead of waiting for labor to start on its own.

WHEN IS LABOR INDUCTION RECOMMENDED IN HEALTHY PREGNANCIES?

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends **offering labor induction between 41 and 42 weeks and recommends labor induction at 42 weeks.**²

WHO CHOOSES IF AND WHEN I HAVE LABOR INDUCTION?

- It is **your choice** to have an induction or not and you can change your mind.
- Your care provider may recommend labor induction for the health of you or your baby. You can ask about the reasons for their recommendation and decide to say yes or no.



WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THESE CHOICES?

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WAIT FOR SPONTANEOUS LABOR?

- You wait at home for signs of labor.
- Your care provider will offer you extra check-ups after 41 weeks.
- It can take 8-24 hours for your baby to be born (sometimes shorter, sometimes longer).

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO SCHEDULE LABOR INDUCTION?

- You and your care provider will make an appointment for your induction.
- Sometimes the date and time you want isn't available or needs to change.
- It can take 1-3 days in the hospital until your baby is born (sometimes shorter, sometimes longer).
- There may be more monitoring and interventions.

WHAT CAN HELP MY LABOR START?

WHAT CAN HELP MY LABOR START ON ITS OWN?

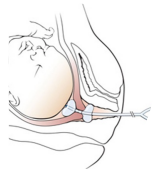
- **Membrane sweeps** after 39 weeks increase the chance your labor will begin. A membrane sweep involves a care provider doing a vaginal examination and making circular movements in the area of your cervix with their finger.³



- **Nipple stimulation** (manually or with a breast pump) probably helps.⁴
- **Acupuncture** might help.⁵

WHAT MEDICINES AND TREATMENTS CAN INDUCE MY LABOR?

- **Prostaglandins** help the cervix get ready for labor. They can be swallowed as a pill or inserted inside the vagina. Sometimes they can cause contractions.
- A **cervical balloon** is a tube with a balloon that is placed inside the cervix to help slowly open the cervix (dilate). It is put in for up to 12 hours to help get the cervix ready for labor.
- **Pitocin** is a medicine that can be given in an IV that starts your labor and starts contractions.



Ask your care provider questions you have about these options.



WHAT IS THE SAME ABOUT THESE CHOICES?

- Same chance of breastfeeding.⁶
- Same chance of complications for baby (seizures in baby, pneumonia in the baby, harm to the baby's body, or problems getting air to baby's brain).⁶
- Same chance of a severe tear in the vagina.⁶
- Same chance of too much bleeding after the birth.⁶
- Same chance of needing help to get the baby out with tools like forceps or a vacuum.⁶

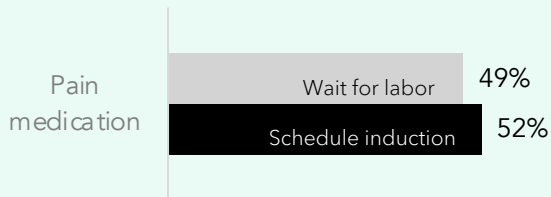
Think about what matters most **to you.**



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES FOR ME AND MY BABY?

1 Wait for labor to start on its own

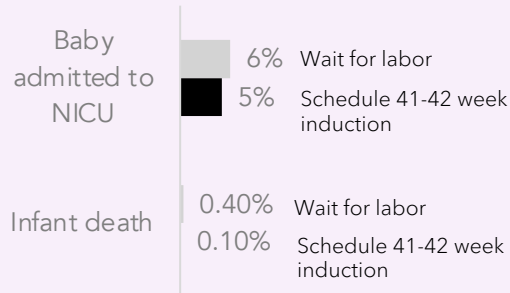
- Possibly lower chance of using pain medication in labor.⁶



- Probably more satisfaction with your care.⁷
- Probably less time in the hospital before your baby comes.
- You might want this for personal or cultural reasons.

2 Schedule an induction between 41-42 weeks

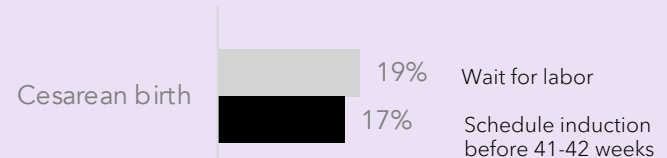
- Lower chance of your baby being admitted to the NICU and infant death.⁶



3 Request an induction between 39-41 weeks

- You might want this for personal or cultural reasons.

- Induction sometime before 41-42 weeks probably lowers the chance of cesarean birth.^{6,8}



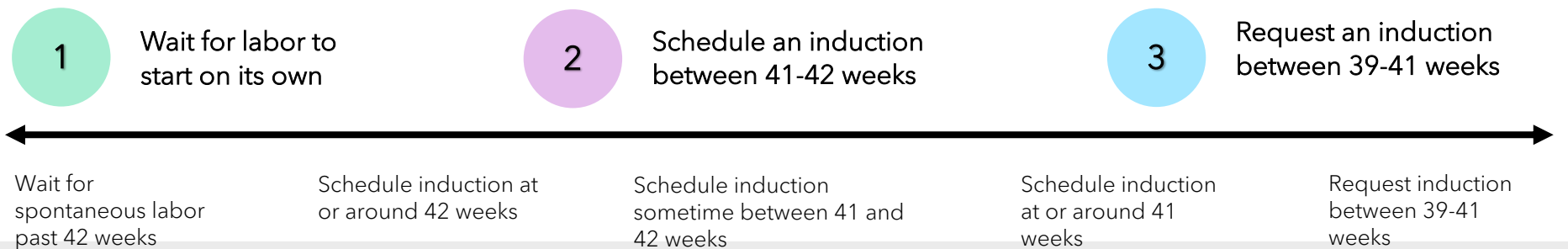
WHAT CAN HELP ME CHOOSE?

Think about what is important to you, ask your care provider questions you have, and tell them what you choose.

How important is this to me?	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not sure
My labor starts on its own				
My baby comes sooner than later				
Less time in the hospital and fewer interventions				
Lower risks to me and my baby after 41-42 weeks				
Personal and/or cultural reasons				
Something else...				

MY QUESTIONS AND NOTES:

Right now I'm leaning towards... (circle one or more options depending on what feels right)



How was this decision aid made?
 This decision aid was made by a group of public health and medical experts. It was tested and changed based on feedback from prenatal care providers and pregnant people who used the decision aid..

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Sources

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