

Induction of labour for women who have had a previous caesarean birth





Labour is a natural process that usually starts on its own, but sometimes it needs to be started artificially; this is called 'induced labour'. Labour can be induced because your baby is overdue, your waters have broken or because there are risks to you or your baby's health in continuing the pregnancy.

Various methods can be used to encourage the cervix (neck of the womb) to open, and so to induce labour. These include medicines known as prostaglandins (vaginal gels or pessaries), used to soften the cervix. An infusion of a drug called oxytocin, used to speed up labour, and mechanical methods (such as breaking waters and/or balloon catheters).

If you are aiming to have a vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC) prostaglandins are unlikely to be used as they can be associated with a 2-3 fold increase of scar rupture. In contrast, inductions using a balloon catheter are thought to carry a similar risk to labouring naturally (RCOG 2015).

How does the double balloon catheter work?

A double balloon catheter can be used to help induce labour by causing the cervix to soften and open. Balloon catheter induction cannot be used if the waters around the baby have already broken.

The balloon catheter is gently inserted by a doctor into the vagina, then through the cervix, and slowly filled with warm water. One balloon will sit in the lower part of the womb, and the other in the upper part of the vagina. It is usually done with the mother lying on her back. The end of the catheter will be loosely taped to your inner thigh and once inserted you will be able to move around as normal.

The balloon catheter is left in place for up to 12 hours. You will be cared for in the hospital during this time. If labour begins the catheter will fall out but this does not hurt and should not alarm you. If your waters break, or the baby seems to be in distress, the balloons are deflated and the catheter is removed.

If labour does not begin, the balloon will be deflated and removed and you will have a discussion with the doctor to make a revised plan.



What are the benefits of having a balloon catheter?

The balloon catheter has the following benefits for women who have previously had a caesarean birth:

- Much lower risk of scar rupture
- Lower risk to baby's wellbeing in labour
- Less pain overall during induction of labour
- Less likely to result in another caesarean birth.

There are always some risks in carrying out any procedure, and these include a small risk of infection. This is minimised by careful infection-control practices

How can I find out more about my options?

If you reach your estimated date of delivery you will continue to be cared for by your named midwife. Your midwife may carry out cervical sweeps, by sweeping a finger around the cervix during a vaginal examination. This can help to encourage labour to start. After five days your midwife will refer you to an obstetrician to discuss your individual preferences and suggested options for birth.

If you would like to discuss your individual options further with an Obstetrician before this time, please ask your Midwife to refer you, or call Antenatal Clinic on 01225 824650 to leave a message.

For more information

- Further evidence-based information about VBAC can be found at: <https://www.nct.org.uk/birth/vaginal-birth-after-caesarean-vbac>

Contact telephone numbers

Bath Birthing Centre:	01225 824447 or 01225 824847
Trowbridge Community Midwives:	01225 765840 or 01225 711319
Chippenham Community Midwives:	01249 456434
Frome Community Midwives:	01373 454763
Paulton Community Midwives:	01761 412107
Bath Team Community Midwives (8.30am-5pm. Outside these hours, please call the Bath Birthing Centre)	07872 696160

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.