

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF LABOR INDUCTION/AUGMENTATION



Disclaimer: If you are interested in Alternative methods of Induction, you should consult a midwife, herbalist, chiropractor, acupuncturist, or other trained health professional FIRST! This handout is to give you ideas of what to expect or what to ask about, not to tell what to you must do. I have gathered information from various websites, midwifery texts, and herbal books, any of which I encourage you to look into for yourself to verify information given. These are all sources readily available to the public, so I am not giving out any kind of information that you could not have gleaned on your own with a simple google © search. I do **not** support induction for non-medical reasons; your Bishop's score and further evaluation by your provider should indicate whether or not you should pursue induction. Please tell your provider your plans to pursue alternative methods of induction in case of concern of medication interactions, etc.

I'll start with where it should all start...your cervix. If your cervix is not ready for labor, then no method of induction will help, alternative or otherwise. This is why the Bishop's score is so important! So, if you are facing a post dates pregnancy or have been told that you will have to be induced, preparing your cervix is the way to start. I will start with least invasive to most invasive.

1-Visualization and Relaxation

Visualizing your cervix opening and relaxation is key to birth, and it is key to induction. Work with your body, and it will work with you. Sometimes there are psychological or emotional issues that you may need to work through before labor can begin. An honest self-evaluation of your present circumstances and prayer/meditation on what you can do to let go of any fears or stressors may be just what your body needs to let go and release itself into labor. Watching birth videos may also help to get you "in the mood" for labor, try it, can't hurt, might help! ☺ Or, try a brisk walk (but don't tire yourself out) to help clear the air and get your baby into the best position for birth.

2-Prostaglandins

Prostaglandins are the hormones which ripen/soften the cervix. Semen is the best natural source of prostaglandins! So, make love to your husband/partner daily and allow the semen to stay in contact with your cervix by elevating your hips (if this is not painful) for as long as possible. Cervadil (used in hospital's to ripen your cervix) is actually very concentrated synthetically produced semen. Semen taken orally will also be beneficial and some studies have shown that it is actually absorbed better through the gut!

3-Evening Primrose Oil or Borage Oil

Take Evening Primrose oil (500mg gel-caps) or Borage Oil (more potent) orally 3X's per day and insert 4(or as many as 8) in the vagina at bedtime--you must stay lying down or else they may fall out (some women do not have this problem) the capsules will dissolve overnight. It doesn't START labor, only prepares the cervix. Both EPO and Borage Oil have prostaglandin precursors, which means that they encourage your body to produce prostaglandins. You buy EPO at just about any health food/vitamin/herbal type store (I have found EPO at Wal-mart and Super G!). It comes in capsules that look just like vitamin E (some contain Vitamin E which may help to elasticize your perineal tissues). You can also massage it onto your cervix. You can start taking about 2 - 3 capsules orally daily at 37 weeks. Then about a week later you may start putting it on your cervix as long as the bag of waters is intact.

4-Oxytocin and Emenagogues(herbs which bring on the menstrual flow)

Nipple stimulation is a well-known method of contracting your uterus. Used by midwives for centuries, it not only stimulates the uterus during labour, it is very beneficial after the birth to aid in expelling the placenta and thus avoiding hemorrhage. Do nipple stimulation for 15 minutes at a time every three or four hours. As this method uses your natural oxytocin, it is the safest form of induction. Nipple Stimulation during sex is even

better if you are also brought to orgasm as orgasm releases oxytocin as well and can help get good contractions started!

Accupressure on the Spleen 6. This is a pressure point on the inside of your lower calf, about 4 or 5 fingerbreadths up from your ankle. For more information on this, ask your Doula or a good reference to this is *The Birth Partner* by Penny Simkin.

Chiropractic getting an adjustment from your chiropractor who is experienced in inductions may be just what you need to get your labor going.

Blue and Black Cohosh, or Cotton Root Bark, are emenagogues. It is often seen as a last ditch method, but if artificial induction is threatened this is a much more natural form of induction. **Don't** use it if you are anemic or have a history of postpartum bleeding, high blood pressure or excessive blood loss during birth. The cohosh tinctures can cause a lowering of blood pressure, so load up on the fluids when using them. Take 10 drops of each Blue and Black Cohosh four times daily or as often as every hour. (Anne Frye recommends the additional use of Ginger tincture in the same dosage taken at the same time to encourage uterine activity.) These are more of a preparatory dosage than an induction. Use only with the acceptance of your doctor. "For induction, Cotton Root Bark tincture is perhaps the most effective of all labor-inducing herbal remedies. It does not produce nausea, not does it cause the fetal heart rate to fluctuate or maternal blood pressure to drop, all of which are possible when using large amounts of blue and black cohosh.", Anne Frye, *Holistic Midwifery Volume II*. After using the Cohosh tinctures as stated above and it having no or little effect, Anne Frye recommends, "First, you can give a dropperful of blue cohosh tincture at 30 minute intervals for 1 to 2 doses. Then switch to cotton root bark tincture in dropperful doses spaced as often as every 15 minutes the for next 3 to 6 hours."

Castor Oil

Castor oil cocktail. Take one large glass of orange juice or apple juice (apple juice may be easier on you when it is coming out, as it is less acidic) in three teaspoonful of castor oil and one teaspoon of baking soda. It gets nice and foamy. Almost like pop, it goes down much easier than swallowing castor oil by itself. It works by stimulating the bowels, which in turn stimulates the uterus, so Metamucil works too and is much easier to take! Although, Castor oil is thought to contain those prostaglandin precursors that EPO and Borage Oil contain also. Some women take castor oil in a milkshake or protein shake also. I have also heard of women taking it mixed in scrambled eggs! This will cause diarrhea and so precautions should be taken to retain fluid levels. Drink lots of water!!!

An enema also works the same as castor oil, and though invasive, it may be the one to do the trick. Fleet is available over the counter

Stripping the Membranes

This should only be done by someone who knows what they are doing! This involves using the fingers to separate the bag of waters (BOW) from your cervix/uterus. The attendant separates the BOW from the cervix by running her finger around the internal os (opening of the cervix) between the cervix and the membranes. She must get her fingers all the way around up to her second knuckle to have any effect. This is very uncomfortable and much more invasive, but may be preferable to medical induction.

Other Preparatory Methods:

PN-6, Squawvine Tincture, Gelsemium Tincture, blowing up balloons, fresh pineapple (for the bromelain), spicy foods (be careful of heartburn!), Polly's 7-week formula, Homeopathics...consult your homeopath before dosing yourself or using homeopathy

Use caution with Gelsemium, high doses can be toxic!

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