



## WATER BREAKING ... AND STAYING AT HOME.

If your water breaks (SROM) before labor begins, you do not have to run off to the hospital or birthing center if you do not want to. It is often several hours (and in some cases, days) before labor begins. Staying at home may actually decrease your rate of infection (as long as you do not have Group B Strep)! This is the case because as many precautions as hospitals take, they are still full of sick people and germs. Your home is where your body is used to living, and has built up a resistance to any pathogens (germs) that reside there. Also, by staying home, you avoid unnecessary vaginal exams.

It is important to drink lots of water, take your temperature and assess your heart rate every 2-4 hours. As your doula/monitrice, there are ways of telling how far along in your labor you are should you begin labor and your water has broken. I do not have to do a vaginal exam to have a pretty fair assessment of where you are in your labor. I will simply use the heart rate method. (The place where you assess fetal heart tones on a baby moves as the baby becomes better engaged and moves down into the birthing canal.) Also, as your labor progresses, your noises and where you feel the pain will change, as well as the frequency and duration of your contractions. We will discuss before labor occurs how long you wish to stay at home before calling your midwife, going to the birth center, or going to the hospital.

It is important to know beforehand what your provider thinks about your staying at home after your water has broken. Some doctors want you in labor within 12 hours after SROM or they will want to induce, some will wait 24 hours, and some even longer, if you are being monitored or will consent to antibiotics. This decision however, is ultimately up to you and you need to make an informed decision as to what is best for you and for your baby.

"It is not necessary to go to the hospital the minute your water bag breaks, especially with no contractions. But it is important to take precautions to keep infection from occurring. A woman should take her temperature every 4 hours and check her pulse rate. Any increase above 99 degrees with an increased pulse rate of 20 beats per minute (example: a normal pulse of 80 that increases to 100 with an increase in temp. above 99) indicates a trip to the hospital as infection may be occurring. Drinking lots of fluids (4 quarts per day) during the wait for labor is important because it helps maintain amniotic fluid volume during leaking. If labor does not start within 72 hours with the true-ruptured BOW, an evaluation should be done to ascertain why labor has not begun." — Joan M. Dolan **Midwifery Today Forums**

"These findings...support the observation that, contrary to previously accepted belief, prolonged interval between rupture of membranes and delivery does not increase the maternal and neonatal infection rate. Rather, with PROM the interval from digital examination to delivery is the critical parameter in the incidence of infection."  
— **Henci Goer**, *Obstetric Myths versus Research Realities*, Bergin and Garvey 1995.

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