

## Pre-labour Rupture of Membranes at Term

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Pre-labour Rupture of Membranes at Term is when your waters have broken after 37+0 weeks of pregnancy and labour has not yet started, or established (you may be experiencing some tightening's and discomfort).

'Membranes' are the layers of thin tissue that enclose your baby and amniotic fluid (waters, also called liquor) inside the uterus (womb). Once the membranes have ruptured (broken) the amniotic fluid around your baby leaks out. Sometimes this can be a large gush and is really obvious, sometimes it can be a slow trickle. This can happen if the hole in the membranes is small or not directly in front of the baby's head (also called a hind-water leak).

Pre-labour rupture of membranes at term occurs in 8-10% of all pregnancies. Of these, 60% of women will go into labour within 24 hours.

Pre-labour rupture of membranes increases the risk of neonatal infection from 0.5% to 1%

With these factors in mind we encourage women to wait for 24 hours after their waters have broken to see if labour starts on its own. If it does not then we will offer induction/augmentation of labour after 24 hours have passed. Ideally we like to have all babies born with 96 hours of the waters breaking.

If there are concerns about yours or your baby's well-being we would recommend immediate induction/augmentation of labour.

### Waiting for Labour to start

Whilst you wait for labour to start there are a few things we would like you to do to encourage labour and to keep you and your baby safe:

- Keep active and upright as much as possible – upright positions will help your baby to descend into the pelvis and put pressure on your cervix, which can help labour to start. When you need a rest avoid lying flat on your back, lie on your side or prop yourself up with pillows
- Eat and drink as normally as possible to help keep your energy levels up. Isotonic (sports type) drinks can be particularly beneficial in labour.
- Gain support from your birth companion(s) – they can help to keep you comfortable and give you essential encouragement
- Monitor the water you are losing – sometimes you may get a large gush, especially if you are getting contractions, sometimes it may be a small trickle or nothing much at all. The water should be clear, but may have bits of 'show' in it. This may be small clumps of jelly like substance and may have streaks of blood. Normal amniotic fluid does not have a very strong smell. You should change your sanitary pad at least every 4 hours. If your waters are anything other than described here (discoloured, smelly) you must phone the hospital.
- Check your temperature every 4 hours when you are awake. If you do not have a thermometer we will give you some disposable ones, please make sure you know how to use these. If your temperature is 37.5°C or above, phone the hospital.

- Bath or shower as you wish
- Monitor your baby's movements
- We recommend avoiding sexual intercourse once your waters have broken as this may increase the risk of infection

**You should phone the hospital if:**

- You think labour has started / is progressing (you may be in early labour when you go home)
- You think you may have an infection – feeling unwell / shivery and/or temperature 37.5°c or above.
- You have concerns, or are unsure about your babies movements
- The water is discoloured or smelly
- Any other concerns about yourself or your baby

**After 24 hours:**

If you have not needed to come to the hospital before this point then we would like to see you now - please follow the instructions below of who to call. If labour has not started we will offer to start it for you (see induction of labour leaflet). If you do not wish to have your labour started we will be happy to support this after a discussion of the risks and benefits.

If you are not contracting at all we will probably recommend a 'Propess' pessary to start labour. If you are contracting we will probably recommend an oxytocin infusion (hormone drip). We will discuss with you the preferred method along with risks and benefits.

Because of the increased risk of infection once your waters have broken, we will avoid performing vaginal examinations as much as possible.

**Who to phone:**

Monday – Friday 8:00am – 8:00pm

Maternity Assessment Centre: 01423 557531 / 557548 for advice or with any concerns

All other times

Central Delivery Suite: 01423 553184 / 01423 553185

After 24 hours have passed:

Phone Central Delivery Suite at ..... to confirm your admission time

**Further Information**

For further information about pre-labour rupture of membranes at term or induction of labour and all aspects of pregnancy and childbirth, please talk to your Midwife or Doctor.

References: NICE (2014); Intrapartum Care Guideline. For information about NICE clinical guidelines programme you can visit their website at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.