

## What happens in a normal pregnancy when you reach week 41+0?

Every fifth pregnancy reaches gestational week 41+0. Most births start on their own within the next few days. For all pregnant people, it is recommended that labour should start by the end of week 41 at the latest. The risk of the baby dying in the womb after week 40+6 is low (around 0.05%) but increases slightly after week 42+0 and is slightly higher:

- when the baby is not growing normally
- when you are expecting your first child

and when the pregnant person:

- is 40 years of age or older
- has a BMI of  $\geq 30$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> (obesity)
- was born in Africa south of the Sahara.

Research has shown that there may be medical benefits to inducing labour at the beginning of week 41, especially when the risk of foetal death is slightly higher. Pregnant people who have any of the risk factors mentioned above are therefore offered induction of labour at the beginning of week 41.

The midwife sends a referral to the maternity clinic at the visit in week 40 if you, as a pregnant person, have risk factors. If you are hesitant to induce labour and wish to see a doctor for an individual assessment, the midwife will write this in the referral. The maternity clinic will contact you via phone or digitally no later than in week 40+6. If you wish to have labour induced, an appointment will be made to do so within a few days. Depending on the maternity ward capacity, the time may need to be postponed for another 1-2 days.

Pregnant people without risk factors and pregnant people who have some risk factor but want to wait with induction have an ultrasound done at the beginning of week 41 to check that the baby has grown normally and that there is a normal amount of amniotic fluid. If the ultrasound is normal, the induction of labour is offered at the end of week 41 (usually week 41+5). You or your midwife schedule the induction by calling the maternity clinic in week 41+3. Depending on the maternity ward capacity, the induction may need to be postponed for another 1-2 days. In case of abnormal findings on the ultrasound, you must come to the maternity clinic the same day to assess when labour should be induced.

## Do you have to induce labour in week 41?

No, you can choose for yourself if you want to wait until week 42+0.

## Are there any disadvantages to inducing labour in week 41?

Research has not been able to demonstrate any significant medical disadvantages to inducing labour at the beginning of week 41, but the onset of labour often takes longer, especially for first-time pregnancies. Pregnant people who have previously given birth by caesarean section have not been included in the studies that investigated medical advantages and disadvantages, and therefore an individual assessment is recommended in these cases. The recommendation that labour should have started either spontaneously or by induction at the end of week 41 at the latest also applies to pregnant people who have previously given birth by caesarean section.

## How is labour induced?

There are different methods to induce labour. The method to be used depends on several factors and is decided when you arrive at the maternity ward.

- If the cervical portio (*portio vaginalis*) is immature, you may be given medication that causes the cervix to begin to soften and open, usually in repeated doses over 1-2 days until the labour pains start to become painful.
- Another alternative is that you get a so-called balloon catheter. This is a soft tube that is inserted into the cervix via the vagina and then filled with fluid. The fluid-filled balloon dilates the cervix.
- When the cervix is ripe, the midwife or doctor can pierce the amniotic membranes to allow the water to break. An IV is then often needed to induce labour pain so delivery can begin.

How long it takes to induce labour is individual. It may take a few hours or several days. If the cervix is completely immature, both medication and the balloon method may need to be used before it becomes possible to pierce the amniotic membrane. As with all births, you can get help with pain relief to be able to rest and sleep. More detailed information is available on the maternity clinics' websites and on 1177.

## Who do I contact if I have questions?

You can always contact your midwife if you have questions or need more information to make your choice.