

39-40 weeks

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By week 40, you have reached your due date. Your baby should be here or could be coming any day. You might need a little help to kick start your labor or you may have medical issues or baby issues (low amniotic fluid for example!) that may require your baby to be delivered.

Here is the scoop for induction of labor - 😊

Labor induction is the use of medications or other methods to bring on (induce) labor.

Ripening the cervix is a process that helps the cervix soften and thin out in preparation for labor. Medications or devices may be used to soften the cervix so it will stretch (dilate) for labor. Medications are placed in the vagina to soften the cervix

Sometimes, **Rupturing the amniotic sac** can start contractions. It also can make them stronger if they have already begun. Your doctor makes a small hole in the amniotic sac with a special tool. This procedure, called an amniotomy, can be done in the hospital with fetal monitoring and maternal monitoring. It is a safe procedure and is usually painless but can help get labor started.

Oxytocin is a hormone that causes contractions of the uterus. It can be used to start labor or to speed up labor that began on its own. Contractions usually start about 30 minutes after oxytocin is given. Oxytocin is a natural hormone made by your body to cause contractions and often your body might start having regular contractions without the need for medications.

There are 4 components to a safe delivery – **Passenger** (size of the baby), **Pelvis** (size of the birth canal), **Power** of your contractions and **Passage of time**. Your doctor will give you adequate time to safely deliver while adjusting your medications to increase your contractions safely. Alas, we cannot change the size of the pelvis or the passenger at this stage 😊

How can you care for yourself at home?

Learn how labor can be started

- If you and your baby are both healthy and ready, and if your cervix has started to open, your doctor may "break your water" (rupture the amniotic sac). This often starts labor.



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- If your cervix is not quite ready, you may get a medicine called Pitocin through an IV to start contractions.
- If your cervix is still very firm, you may have prostaglandin tablets (misoprostol) placed in your vagina to soften the cervix.

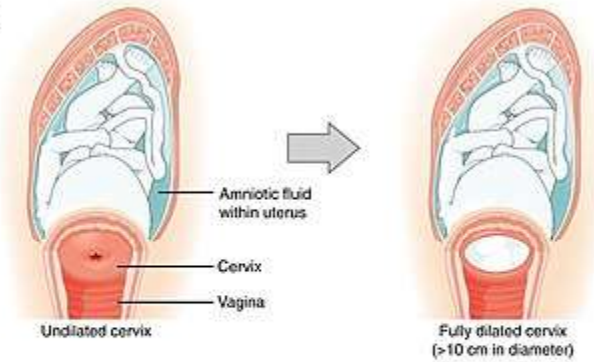
Try guided imagery to help you relax

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes.
- Start by just taking a few deep breaths to help you relax.
- Picture a setting that is calm and peaceful. This could be a beach, a mountain setting, a meadow, or a scene that you choose.
- Imagine your scene, and try to add some detail. For example, is there a breeze? What does the sky look like? Is it clear, or are there clouds?
- It often helps to add a path to your scene. For example, as you enter the meadow, imagine a path leading you through the meadow to the trees on the other side. As you follow the path farther into the meadow you feel more and more relaxed.
- When you are deep into your scene and are feeling relaxed, take a few minutes to breathe slowly and feel the calm.
- When you are ready, slowly take yourself out of the scene back to the present. Tell yourself that you will feel relaxed and refreshed and will bring that sense of calm with you.
- Count to 3, and open your eyes.

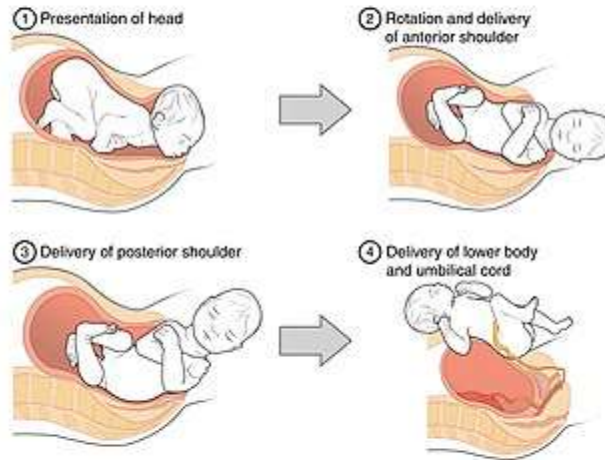
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**Stage 1:
Dilation**



**Stage 2:
Birth**



**Stage 3:
Afterbirth
delivery**

