



Your waters have broken A guide to looking after yourself at home (page 1 of 2)

This is a leaflet for women whose waters have broken at term (37-42 weeks pregnant) have had no complications during their pregnancy and have decided not to have their labour induced (started off).

You will have been seen by either your community midwife or a midwife at the hospital and you will have had a check up to see that both you and your baby are well, and that your waters have definitely broken. We would have offered you induction of labour but if you decide you would like to wait until labour happens, you will have been advised about looking after yourself until this time.

You will have been given a date and time to go in to the Maternity Unit to have your labour induced if this does not start naturally. Until this time you do not need to go to hospital unless you are concerned about anything – see below.

There is a risk of developing an infection that might be harmful to either you or your baby but this is unlikely in the first 24 hours (NICE 2014). If you show any signs of this we would recommend that labour is induced straight away.

If you decide to wait longer than 96 hours after your waters break then you will be offered intravenous antibiotics when you are in labour.

If you decide to wait longer than 24 hours then you should be seen by a midwife every 24 hours to make sure that you and your baby remain well.

Sometimes labour does not start....

60% of women will go into labour by 24 hours after their waters have broken (NICE 2014) but other studies suggest this number maybe higher.

We recommend that you are offered induction of labour (started off) on the same day as your waters have gone or are given the choice to wait 24 hours (NICE 2014). You may wish to discuss with your midwife the option of waiting even longer. We do not recommend that

you go longer than 96 hours as your risk of developing an infection will increase.

If you are being induced you should telephone the labour ward at 7am on the date given who will advise of the time to come into hospital. You will either have your labour started with a hormone drip (syntocinon) or with a prostaglandin gel which is inserted behind the cervix (neck of the

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer-care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Labour ward

 **01722 425183**

womb) depending on how 'ready' your cervix is for labour.

If your baby is born longer than 18 hours after your waters broke then we advise that you remain in hospital for a minimum of 12 hours for the baby to be observed for signs of infection.

Things to look out for

There are various signs that might mean you are starting to develop an infection. **If you are concerned about anything please contact the Maternity Unit for advice immediately** (see the telephone number at the bottom of this leaflet). A midwife will have gone through the list below with you which tells you what to look out for:

- the colour of the water should be clear or pink only. If it becomes yellow/green/brown it may be that your baby has had his/her bowels open – sometimes a sign that he or she could be distressed. Please phone the Maternity Unit immediately.
- the water should not smell offensive.
- your baby should be moving well.
- you should feel generally well. But if you feel unwell or develop 'flu-like' symptoms, please phone the Maternity Unit.
- check your temperature and pulse 3 times a day whilst you are waiting for labour to start. Your temperature should not be more than 37.5°C and your pulse not more than 100 beats per minute. The midwife will have explained this to you.

Frequently asked questions

Q Why do some women not go into labour when their waters break?

A Most women will go into labour within 24 hours of their waters breaking. There are some who do not and the reasons for this are largely unknown.

Q Can I still take a bath when my waters have broken?

A Baths and showers are fine.

Q Can I still have sex after my waters have broken?

A We would advise you not to have sexual intercourse.

Q Why do I need to check my temperature and pulse?

A When the waters have broken, it means there is a hole in the protective membranes around the baby. This can sometimes lead to infection which may result in your having a high temperature and/or pulse. Your midwife will advise you how and when to check your temperature and pulse.

Need to know more about being induced?

Ask your midwife for more information and ask for an induction of labour leaflet.

Labour Ward

 01722 425183