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Tips: Preparing for Delivery

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By 40 weeks of pregnancy, most women are more than ready for the grand entrance of their little miracle. Especially when the 'little miracle' is making it hard to get comfortable, sleep, or tie your shoes. So naturally, if the due date passes, thoughts of 'getting things going' or inducing labour may cross your mind.

First of all, it is important to remember that 40 weeks is only an estimate. This means that although you have reached your 40-week mark, your baby may still have some growing and maturing to do in the womb. For this reason it is very important that you never try to induce labour before your due date.

Once you have the green light from your obstetrician or midwife to naturally help things along, here are a few tips to help start your uterine contractions or increase their speed and regularity:

Walking

It is easy to just stop everything once your first few contractions start. What you may not know is that movement can actually help your delivery. Walking is a great way to get blood pumping through the body, increasing circulation, while gravity pulls the baby's head downward. Going for a walk is also calming and a great distraction from clock watching.

Sex

You've heard the rumors, and they're TRUE, sex helps increase contractions! The prostaglandins in your partner's semen actually help stimulate the uterus to contract. And when you orgasm your uterus contracts while your brain sends out a wave of relaxing 'pleasure hormones', reducing stress and calming your nerves. So although it may not seem like the most ideal time, sex may be the trick to getting your labour under way.

Acupuncture

No longer limited to the East, midwives, doctors and acupuncturists around the world are using acupuncture to help cervical ripening and to induce labour. With studies from China, Austria, Sweden and the US all showing shortened first stages, increased speed of contraction intervals and even reduced need for epidural analgesia in some cases, acupuncture is quickly becoming a standard practice in a lot of major cities. If you choose to get acupuncture, always remember to look for a licensed acupuncturist or Doctor of Chinese Medicine with labour and delivery experience.

Massage

Although more subtle than the others, this is a favorite option of pregnant women everywhere. Get your partner, doula, or friend to massage your neck, shoulders and lower back. Not only can it improve circulation and help begin contractions, it feels GREAT and helps keep you calm and relaxed.

Castor Oil

Although not the tastiest option for inducing labour, castor oil can increase your intestinal contractions, which because of the proximity of the intestines to the uterus, also increases your uterine contractions. The suggested amount differs depending on whom you talk to, ranging from 1 to 3 ounces. Check online for castor oil recipes.