

What happens if my waters break before I go into Labour?

What are the waters?

- ◆ When you are pregnant your baby lies in a bag of water inside your womb. The waters around your baby are called amniotic fluid.
- ◆ One of the main reasons for the baby lying in this bag is to prevent any infection.
- ◆ The waters break in approximately 8% of women with pregnancies of 37 weeks or more.
- ◆ When the bag breaks, the water will trickle out of the birth canal (vagina).
- ◆ You will either feel a gush of water or a trickle. Sometimes the waters may break before you have any contractions.
- ◆ The water should be clear.

If you are not sure whether the waters have gone or not you should telephone the central delivery suite on **0151 708 9988**, and ask to speak to the **Shift Leader on Central Delivery Suite** who will advise you about what to do next.

What happens if my waters have broken?

- If your waters have broken you will need to come into the hospital (make sure that you are wearing a maternity pad or a towel as you may lose more water).
- Please bring your blue hospital notes with you.
- You will be seen in the assessment room, which is a small unit next to the delivery suite.
- You will have your blood pressure, temperature and pulse checked.
- The midwife will check the position of the baby by gently feeling your tummy (abdomen)
- The CTG (Cardiotocograph) machine will take a recording of the baby's heartbeat.

What happens if I am not sure if my waters have broken or not?

- The midwife who speaks to you on the 'phone may advise you to wait for a little while at home.
- If she advises you to come in please bring your hospital notes with you.
- Again, you will be seen in the assessment room.
- You will have your blood pressure, temperature and pulse checked.
- Your midwife will check the position of the baby by gently feeling your tummy (abdomen)
- The CTG (Cardiotocograph) machine will take a recording of the baby's heartbeat.
- You may be asked to lie on your side for at least 20 minutes so that the water can collect in the birth canal.
- Following this, you may need to have a speculum examination. This is a metal or plastic instrument (used for taking smears) which is placed in the vagina so that the cervix (neck of the womb) can be seen.
- If your waters have broken your midwife will be able to see water coming through the birth canal (vagina).

What are the risks?

If your pregnancy is 37 weeks or more there are several safe ways for midwives and doctors to care for you and your baby. You will be asked to decide if you would like to wait and go into labour naturally, or to be started off (induced).

The evidence we have from a study that involved 5041 women world wide told us that whichever way you choose to go into labour the chance of needing a caesarean section or getting an infection is exactly the same.

What happens if I decide to wait?

- ◆ We need to keep a close watch on both you and the baby to make sure that there are no signs of infection.
- Your midwife will provide disposable thermometers for you to take your temperature in the morning and evening (we will explain how this is done).
- You will be advised to attend the hospital each day for a CTG to make sure that your baby is well.
- If your waters have been broken for more than 24 hours you will need to have antibiotics whilst you are in labour, as this has been shown to help you and your baby after you give birth. These are given into your vein through a drip every 6 hours.
- You will be given an information sheet advising you about what to look for whilst you are at home.
- You may go into labour at any time after your waters have broken. If you think you are going into labour, please 'phone **0151 708 9988**, and ask to **speak to the Shift Leader on Central Delivery Suite** who will advise you about what to do next.
- ◆ If you have not had your baby 4 days after the waters have broken you will be advised to have your labour induced. This date will be arranged at the first visit to the hospital when your waters have broken.
- ◆ If you decide that you no longer wish to wait for labour to begin by itself you can opt to have your labour induced.

What happens if I decide to be induced?

- It may be possible to have your labour induced once it is certain that the waters have broken.
- However this depends on how busy the delivery suite is and how many other women are booked to be induced for that day already.
- It may be necessary to wait until later that day or even the following day.
- The way in which your labour is started off depends on whether the neck of the womb is ready for labour.

For more information please see the information sheet '**Having your labour induced**'.

If you are less than 37 weeks pregnant

- ◆ You will need to stay in hospital as at this early stage in your pregnancy the risk of infection to both you and the baby is increased.
- ◆ Whilst in hospital your temperature will be checked regularly and blood specimens will be taken each day to check for signs of infection.
- ◆ The doctors will decide if at any point your labour needs to be started off by looking at the results of these tests daily.

This information is not intended to replace discussion with either medical or midwifery staff. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this leaflet please discuss this with a midwife or obstetrician. The hospital is involved in research and you might be asked to consider taking part in a research study. A midwife or doctor will discuss this with you and answer any questions that you may have.

Further information

For further information there is a list of useful web sites which can be found on the Liverpool Women's Hospital web site.

Go to

www.lwh.org.uk

Click on

Clinical Services

↓

Support & Information

↓

Useful organisations

If you require any advice about the information on the web sites please speak to a midwife or doctor at the hospital or a community midwife at the GP surgery.

This information was generated from The Women's Information Network Group in the Liverpool Women's Hospital.

This information is available in different formats on request

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