

Alternatives To Hospital Induction

It's awful when you see your due date come and go and still there's no sign of labour. People phoning you up every day asking 'have you had it yet?' – as if you'd forget to tell them if you had! If you've passed your due date and looking for some ways to get labour going here's some ways that you can try. Don't worry as the tips won't set off labour, unless your baby is ready to be born - but if you've had problems in your pregnancy such as bleeding, or the threat of premature labour then check with your midwife first. Before you try anything make sure that you recheck your dates. Get your midwife to look again at the date when your baby is due working from the last day of your period or from your scan. At the beginning of pregnancy the odd days difference here and there doesn't seem very important but when you have a date to be induced it can make all the difference!

Remember these ideas are for LATE babies - a normal pregnancy is 37 - 42 weeks!

1. *Nipple stimulation*. The idea of this is that it can encourage your body to release the hormone oxytocin which can make your uterus contract and set off labour. The truth is you'd probably need several hours, several times a day but it's worth a try! Some women tell me that they've used the shower attachment or a breast pump to stimulate their nipples - but go easy they've still got work to do after the baby's born!
2. *Fresh pineapple*. I'm not aware of any research backing up this theory but lots of women swear that eating fresh pineapple gets them into labour.
3. *Sex*. Prostaglandin, contained in semen, is a natural source of the hormone used in hospital to induce women. After making love stay lying down for as long as you can which allows the semen to bathe the cervix, which can also help the cervix to soften and encourage labour to start.
4. *Stretch and Sweep*. Midwives are encouraged to offer women this procedure once they have gone over their due date. It involves an internal examination either at home or in the clinic, and the midwife gently inserts a gloved finger into the cervix, and sweeps it around between and the bag of membranes that holds your baby. It can be a little bit uncomfortable, but in many cases, can work.
5. *Oral sex*. There is some literature that suggests that the hormone prostaglandin in semen, works ten times more efficiently when absorbed through the stomach than through the vagina.
6. *Reflexology*. Consult a qualified reflexologist about this, but apparently there's a pressure point on the foot that can stimulate contractions of the womb, giving nature a helping hand.
7. *Walking*. Going for a long walk can help to encourage the baby in the right direction and puts pressure onto the cervix which is all good stuff for getting labour going. Make sure that you're with someone and obviously not miles out in the middle of nowhere – walking round the shopping centre is just as effective!
8. *Curries*. Now obviously there are cultural differences in our diets and if spicy food forms part of your staple diet then it's not going to get you into labour. The idea is if you eat something that will result in a few extra trips to the loo, then this can irritate the uterus and kick start labour. Eating the contents of a fruit bowl, or a few slices of raw courgettes, can often have the same effect.

9. *Orgasm*. If sex doesn't appeal to you or your partner, which isn't uncommon towards the end of pregnancy, masturbation can induce labour. When aroused, your body releases the hormone oxytocin, which can cause your uterus to contract, leading to labour.
10. *Primrose Oil*. At 36 weeks of pregnancy take one capsule three times a day, and from week 37–40 one to two capsules per day. There are some suggestions that this can help to soften the cervix encouraging labour to start.
11. *Acupuncture*. Contact an acupuncturist as there are points similar to using reflexology.
12. *Raspberry Leaf Tea*. Can be taken after 36 weeks of pregnancy. The tea tastes awful, but it is more palatable in tablet form.
13. *Avocado*. Laxative effect.
14. *Lobster*. Apparently contains prostaglandin.
15. *Castor oil and orange juice* – ask your midwife.
16. *Homoeopathy*. Contact a practitioner for advice.
17. *Clary Sage and Jasmine essential oils*. Both of these oils can act as a uterine stimulant which is why they are usually listed as being contra-indicated during pregnancy. Many women turn to essential oils for natural induction – you could try massaging them into your bump, putting them in a bath, or putting them on a hot towel on your bump.