
When your waters break before labour

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN YOUR WATERS BREAK?

During pregnancy your growing baby is in your womb (uterus) in a sac of water surrounded by two membranes. Sometimes the sac of water breaks before labour starts. This is called 'waters breaking' or 'membranes rupturing'. Health professionals may refer to it as 'SROM' or 'PROM'. Waters breaking can happen any time during pregnancy. When it happens after 37 weeks, it is called Term PROM.

Waters breaking is a sign that your labour may start soon. Most women whose waters break before labour starts will go into labour naturally within 24 hours and will give birth to their baby within 48 hours.

If your labour does not start within 24 hours of your waters breaking, it is recommended that your labour is started artificially by 'induction'. Earlier induction will be recommended for some women.

RISKS TO YOU AND YOUR BABY

If your waters break before labour starts there is a risk of infection for you and your baby. While this risk is not very high, it does increase slightly the longer the time between your waters breaking and the baby's birth. Induction reduces the risk of infection for you and baby, compared to waiting for labour to start on its own.

QUESTIONS AND NOTES

It is normal to have lots of questions and to feel anxious when your waters break. You should feel free to talk through any questions or concerns with your doctor or midwife.

GOING HOME BEFORE LABOUR OR INDUCTION

You may be sent home from hospital after your waters have broken, to wait for labour to begin. If you do, make sure you:

- eat and drink as normal
- have a bath or shower at home if you would like to
- wash your hands carefully **before** and **after** going to the toilet or changing your pad
- **do not** go swimming
- **do not** have vaginal intercourse
- **do not** use tampons

Things to check for at home

- Note the colour of fluid coming out of your vagina each time you go to the toilet or change your pad.
- Check your temperature every four hours, while you are awake (it should not be higher than 37.0 degrees).
- Pay attention to your baby's movements.
- If you have been prescribed antibiotics, take them as the doctors have advised.
- Call the hospital if you are worried or have questions.

Write down what you notice in this table. Bring it with you to hospital.

Date & Time	Colour of fluid	Baby movements	Temperature	How are you feeling?
<i>e.g. 20/5 6pm</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>36.7</i>	<i>Feeling well</i>

TELEPHONE THE HOSPITAL ON THIS NUMBER _____ IF:

- your baby moves less than they have been
- you feel unwell or your temperature goes above 37.0 degrees
- you feel like you can't catch your breath or your breathing is fast
- the colour of the fluid coming out of your vagina is green, yellow or red
- your tummy or back become sore or you start to have contractions (pains)
- you are worried or have questions

DISCLAIMER

The advice and information contained in this information sheet is of a general nature and does not replace the information and advice given by your maternity care provider/s. We provide this information on the understanding that all persons accessing it take responsibility for its accuracy and appropriateness for their individual needs. The Victorian Maternity and Newborn Clinical Network does not accept any liability to any person for the information or advice provided in this sheet.

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