

# Induction of Labour and Cervical Ripening with Balloon Catheter

## What is a balloon catheter?

A balloon catheter is a soft tube with a small balloon on the end. The tip is placed through the opening of your cervix into the lower part of your uterus. The balloon is then filled with water.

The balloon catheter gets your cervix ready for labour (cervical ripening). It is one of the oldest and safest methods of cervical ripening. In rare cases, the catheter will induce labour contractions.

## What will happen when the balloon catheter is inserted?

A doctor or midwife will talk with you before the balloon catheter is inserted. Your blood pressure, temperature, pulse and breathing will be checked. You may have blood work done. Your baby's heart rate will be monitored for 30 minutes to make sure it is normal.

The catheter will be placed by a doctor. You may need a speculum examination (like a Pap exam). This can be uncomfortable and may cause a feeling of pressure. After the catheter is placed, you may notice some vaginal spotting (light bleeding).

After insertion of the balloon catheter, your baby's heart rate and any contractions will be monitored for at least 1 hour. After 1 hour, as long as you and your baby are fine and you are not in active labour, you will be able to go home. At home you can do your daily activities, eat regular meals and shower. Remember to rest!

If the balloon catheter falls out, this is likely a sign that your cervix has started to soften and open. Plan to come to the hospital at your scheduled time.

## What are the possible complications of a balloon catheter?

Sometimes it is not possible to insert the catheter. This happens in a small number of women. If this happens, the doctor or midwife will talk with you about other ways of cervical ripening.

## When should I call or return to the hospital?

### Call the Maternal/Child Unit if:

- You have concerns and are not sure what to do.

### Return to the hospital if:

- The balloon catheter falls out and it is your planned time to return.
- You have regular contractions 5 minutes or less apart.
- You have vaginal bleeding (like a period).
- You think your water has broken.
- You feel your baby's movements have changed (either more or less).

### Cut the balloon catheter tubing where it is fastened to your leg and return to the hospital if:

- You have more than 5 contractions in 10 minutes.
- You have contractions lasting longer than 120 seconds (2 minutes) from start to finish.

Maternal/Child Unit phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Feel free to call as needed.

Your return appointment:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**