

# Induction of Labour and Cervical Ripening with Balloon Catheter

Preparing the cervix for labour is called cervical ripening. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb) that opens at the top of the vagina.

## 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 helps to get your cervix ready for labour (cervical ripening). It helps to soften, thin, and open the cervix. The balloon catheter is one of the oldest and safest ways to get your cervix ready for labour.
- Rarely, the catheter will induce labour contractions.

## What will happen when the balloon catheter is inserted (put in)?

- Your 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 put in by your doctor. Your doctor may need to use a speculum exam (the same as used during a pap test). This can be uncomfortable and may cause a feeling of pressure. After the catheter is put in, you may notice some vaginal spotting (light bleeding).
- After the catheter is put in, we will monitor your baby's heart rate and your contractions for at least 1 hour. After that time, if you and your baby are well and you are not in active labour (having regular contractions that change your cervix), your health care team may decide you are OK 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. Call the Women and Children's Health Unit to ask if you need to come to the hospital before 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 people. If this happens, your doctor or midwife will talk with you about other ways of cervical ripening.

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

### Call the Women and Children's Health 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 scheduled time to return.
- › You have regular contractions 5 minutes apart or less.
- › 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 attached 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.

### Your return appointment:

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

Women and Children's Health Unit phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Feel free to call as needed.

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