

# Natural Induction Methods

Natural induction is an intervention and, like all interventions, it carries risks. It is best to wait until your due date before trying any natural induction, unless your caregiver is insisting on a medical induction that you are hoping to avoid. All natural induction techniques should be discussed with your doctor or midwife. Time is the best natural method to induce. Babies come when they are ready and your body is ready. Use caution if attempting any of these. Always weigh the risks and benefits.

## WALK

Staying active and moving your pelvis can help the baby engage and encourage contractions to start or strengthen. Walk along a curb, one foot up on the curb and the other one in the gutter, then turn around and go the other way. Sounds strange but it can really work.

## BUMPY CAR RIDE

The combination of movement and relaxation (someone else should be driving) can help the baby get into the right position for birth. You should have something on the car seat to protect it in case your bag of waters releases.

## RELAX

Anxiety can delay the onset of labor. Fill the tub with comfortably warm water, turn the lights off, light some candles and play your favorite relaxing music.

## VISUALIZATION

While you're relaxing in the tub, imagine your uterus contracting as well as the process of labor and the joy of holding your baby in your arms.

## NIPPLE STIMULATION

This is one of the safest forms of induction because it uses the mother's natural oxytocin. One popular method is to apply warm compresses to your breasts and alternately stimulate each breast manually or using a breast pump for 15 minutes each until contractions begin. Another, gentler method is to get into a tub of comfortably warm water. Soak a dish towel or washcloth in the water, and drape it over the breasts. Roll one nipple in your fingers, through the towel, for up to 15 minutes, or as long as it takes to make a contraction happen. When the contraction begins, stop the stimulation. After it ends, wait about 5 minutes before stimulating the other nipple, and repeat the process for an hour. Then, take a break for 3 or 4 hours, and begin again. This is not as hard on the nipples as using a breast pump, and may work as well or better.

## ACUPRESSURE

The three main acupressure points for encouraging labor are: the roof of your mouth just behind the ridge behind the teeth; four fingerwidths above the inner ankle; and between the thumb and forefinger.

## **PINEAPPLE**

If you can tolerate it without getting heartburn, eating lots of pineapple is said to begin labor.

## **SPICY FOOD**

Again, only use this if it won't give you heartburn.

## **CUMIN TEA**

Place one teaspoon of cumin seeds in one cup of boiling water, allow to steep for 5 minutes, then drink. Do not drink more than one cup per day. Traditionally, a raw cube of potato is added to the tea, but the reason for this is not known.

## **SPICED TEA**

Make a cup of tea containing cinnamon, cloves and ginger. Drink one small glass every hour for no more than 6 hours. If this does not trigger labor, stop for 24 hours then try one more time. Do not attempt more than twice.

## **SEX**

Semen applied to the cervix and having an orgasm can both stimulate labor. Swallowing semen also works well, because the prostaglandins are absorbed much more easily and quickly through the stomach. It may be your last chance to have sex for a long time, so you might as well enjoy it :)

## **NATURAL PROSTAGLANDINS**

Borage oil, evening primrose oil, flax seed oil, and black current oil all ripen and soften the cervix and increase the flexibility of the pelvic ligaments. You can take the capsules orally or put one or two in the vagina to melt. Use directly on the cervix only if the amniotic sac is still intact. These will only prepare the cervix, but will not start labor. Please note that there is currently some question as to whether or not orally ingested evening primrose oil has a positive effect on softening your cervix. I encourage you to do your own research.

## **SWINGING**

Go to a local park or playground and swing on those nice big swings. What a great way to start labor!

## **BLOWING UP BALLOONS**

Increases intra-abdominal pressure and can put more pressure on the cervix to move things along, if the baby is already in the optimal position for birth (head down, baby's back to the left of your bellybutton).

## **THIGH MASSAGE**

Have your partner warm some lotion or oil in the palms, begin massage of the inner thighs working in an oval motion covering the area from the knees to the groin. Be sure to tell your partner when the contractions starts so massage can be stopped to prevent overstimulation and contractions that are too strong.