

Helping Your Labor Start with Cervical Ripening

What Is Cervical Ripening?

Cervical ripening is when your cervix softens, thins, and begins to open in preparation for labor. It is often the first step in labor induction. Cervical ripening can happen naturally, or may be started with:

- Misoprostol (a medication)
- A cervical balloon

Can I Start Cervical Ripening at Home?

Yes. Many patients begin cervical ripening at an appointment, return home, and then come back to the hospital when it's time to start labor. At your appointment, you may be given medication or a balloon to help prepare your cervix

Why Go Home?

Cervical ripening at home may allow you to:

- Spend less time in the hospital
- Rest more comfortably
- Eat and drink when you want
- Studies show that going home with a balloon or after receiving medicine is just as safe as staying in the hospital.

Getting Ready for Your Appointment

Before your cervical ripening visit:

- Eat a good meal.
- Pack your hospital bag, and bring it with you just in case. You may be asked to stay in the hospital if:
- Your baby shows signs of stress
- There's not enough fluid around the baby
- You're already in labor



What Happens at the Appointment?

At your cervical ripening visit, we will:

- Listen to your baby's heartbeat
- Check for contractions
- Possibly perform a vaginal exam to see how open the cervix is
- Talk about the options for helping your cervix get ready for labor



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If You Receive Misoprostol (Medication)

- We'll monitor your baby's heartbeat for one hour.
- You may have cramps or discharge (pink, brown, or red mucus).

If You Receive a Cervical Balloon

- You may feel pressure or cramping.
- Some light bleeding with mucus is normal.
- You may feel contractions.

What to Do at Home after Cervical Ripening

While waiting to return to the hospital:

- Eat nourishing foods.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Rest or take a gentle walk.
- Spend time with loved ones.

Come back at your scheduled time.

What if the balloon falls out?

If your balloon falls out before then, you can throw it away. Come back at your scheduled time.

Come back to the hospital before your appointment if any of these 5 signs:

1. You think your water broke
2. If you start having contractions every 3-4 minutes that are very strong for 2 hours
3. If you have vaginal bleeding like a period
4. If you have a fever (temperature higher than 100.4)
5. If you feel like your baby is not moving

What to do if you have pain or cramping

- Take 975mg of Tylenol every 6 hours
- Take a warm shower
- Use a heating pad

If you need to talk to a provider about your appointment call 617-414-2000. A team member will call to confirm your appointment for cervical ripening and for your induction of labor.

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[Everything You Need to Know About Labor Induction](#)

[Helping your Labor Start with Cervical Ripening](#)

[Early Labor Toolkit](#)

[Signs Labor May be Starting](#)

[What to Expect in Labor and Birth](#)

