

What happens now my waters have broken?

Perinatal Services - Maternity

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Introduction

This leaflet gives information and advice about what to do when, after 37 weeks of pregnancy, your waters break but labour has not yet started.

What does 'my waters breaking' mean?

When the bag of water surrounding your baby breaks, fluid leaks from the sac. This leak may be from around the back of the baby's head (hind water) or from in front of the baby's head (forewater).

The sac of water usually breaks during labour. You should not be worried if your waters break before labour starts as, for one in five women this happens from week 37 of pregnancy.

What happens now?

Most women have the choice to wait up to 24 hours at home for labour to start naturally.

If we have any worries about the wellbeing of you or your baby we will recommend your labour is started straight away using medical treatment (induction of labour).

For example:

- If the water is stained with meconium
- There are signs of infection
- You have had a positive group B streptococcus test at any time in the pregnancy or a previous pregnancy and the baby developed group B streptococcus infection.

Your Maternity Doctor or Midwife will talk you through your options.

If my waters have broken, what are the benefits of waiting 24 hours for my labour to start naturally?

- You can spend time in the comfort of your own home with your friends and family around you
- If labour starts within 24 hours there are more options for pain management which may include the use of water for labour and water birth

- If labour starts within 24 hours you may not need continuous fetal monitoring meaning you can move about more during labour.

What are the risks of waiting 24 hours after my waters have broken?

- 1 or 2 babies in every 100 will get an infection after 24 hours of their waters breaking
- If your baby is born more than 24 hours after your waters break, we recommend that you stay in hospital for at least 12 hours afterwards, so that we can closely monitor your baby for any signs of infection.

If waiting 24 hours, how should I look after myself at home?

- Now that your waters have broken, keep a good standard of hygiene to lower the risk of infection. You can bath and shower as normal
- Check your sanitary pad regularly; the water discharge should be clear and not smell (offensive) in any way
- Change your sanitary pad at least every four hours
- Do not use talcum powder or feminine hygiene products as these may cause irritation
- Keep active but do not take long journeys
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat normally
- Sexual intercourse at this time may increase the chance of developing an infection so is not advised
- While you are awake, it is recommended that you take your temperature every four hours as a higher temperature can be a sign of an infection.

Note on the table below:

Date	Time	Temperature

What signs should I look out for at home?

Telephone Maternity Triage on 01902 695037 straight away if:

- **The water discharge changes colour or starts to smell**
 - If the colour of your water changes, keep your sanitary pads and bring them into the hospital to show your Midwife when you are admitted
- **If you feel hot, flushed or unwell in any way**
 - Let the hospital know if your temperature rises above 37.4°C
- **Your baby's movements change in any way**
- **You start to have pain or regular contractions**
- **You start to bleed from the vagina**
- **You are worried about anything or have any questions.**

If you need to return to hospital bring only your birthing partner, pregnancy notes, temperature chart, suitcase and baby clothes.

What happens if I do not go into labour after 24 hours?

- We advise and recommend that you give birth in hospital
- We advise and recommend continuous monitoring of your baby’s heartbeat
- Your Maternity Doctor or Midwife will be happy to talk with you and answer any questions you may have.
- You will be given an appointment to attend the hospital to have your labour induced:

Your appointment to return to the Maternity Induction Unit is:

Date:.....

Time:

Contact number: 01902 694038

Useful Contact numbers

New Cross Maternity Triage Unit	01902 695037
New Cross Delivery Suite	01902 694031
New Cross Midwifery-Led Unit	01902 694033
New Cross Maternity Induction Unit	01902 694038

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。