

Scheduled Delivery

A scheduled delivery is when you and your doctor pick the day that you will be delivered, either by cesarean delivery or by inducing your labor. Most of the time a delivery is scheduled because of the medical needs of the mother or the baby. Some women may prefer to have their delivery scheduled even without medical need. A scheduled delivery may appeal to both the woman and the health care provider because it helps them plan their schedules.

The Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative recommends scheduled deliveries before 39 weeks should occur *only* when there is strong evidence that the health of the woman or baby is at risk if the pregnancy continues.

In the United States in 2005, labor was induced in 1 out of 4 term deliveries and 1 out of 3 women had a cesarean. Some health care providers believe that many scheduled deliveries are medically unnecessary.

The Risk of a Near Term Birth

Inductions may contribute to the growing number of babies who are born "near term," between 36 and 38 weeks gestation. While babies born at this time are usually considered healthy, they are more likely to have medical problems than babies born a few weeks later at full term (39-40 weeks).

A baby's lungs and brain mature late in pregnancy. Compared to a full-term baby, an infant born between 36 and 38 weeks gestation is:

- ❖ 2 to 3 times more likely to be admitted to intensive care. This will mean a longer and more difficult hospital stay for your baby. It may also make it harder for the two of you to breastfeed or bond.
- ❖ More likely to have trouble breathing and need to be connected to a breathing machine (ventilator) to help her breathe.
- ❖ More likely to have trouble maintaining body temperature and need to spend time in a warming area (incubator) to keep her body temperature stable.



Your due date

It can be hard to pinpoint the date your baby was conceived. Being off by just a week or two can result in premature birth. When you became pregnant, your healthcare provider gave you an estimated due date for your baby. This is the date that your baby is expected to be full-term (40 weeks along) and ready to make an entrance into the world. Your due date is based on several factors:

- ❖ Information about your last menstrual period
- ❖ Results from various lab tests
- ❖ The size of your baby based on an ultrasound performed in the first half of pregnancy

When is it okay to have a scheduled delivery?

Your healthcare provider uses established guidelines to make a safe decision about whether or not a scheduled delivery is right for you and your baby. If you don't meet these guidelines, your healthcare provider may recommend awaiting labor to help time your delivery.

Before scheduling a delivery:

- ❖ You should understand the medical reason that you or your baby needs to be delivered early
- ❖ *If there is not a medical reason for you to be delivered early*
 - Your healthcare provider must be very certain of your due date
 - You must be at least 39 weeks along in your pregnancy OR
 - Have had an amniocentesis to see if the baby's lungs are ready to breathe outside the uterus

The Bottom Line

A scheduled delivery is sometimes needed to protect the health of the mother, the baby, or both. But it also has risks. The pregnant woman needs to understand both the benefits and risks. These questions may be useful when you talk to your provider:

If your provider recommends delivery before 39 weeks, ask:

- ❖ Is there a problem with my health or the health of my baby that may make me need to have my baby early?
- ❖ Can I wait to have my baby closer to 40 weeks?

Ask about induction:

- ❖ Why do you need to induce my labor?
- ❖ How will you induce my labor?
- ❖ Will inducing labor increase the chance that I'll need a c-section?

Ask about cesarean section delivery:

- ❖ Why do I need to have my baby by cesarean?
- ❖ What are the risks of a cesarean delivery compared to a vaginal delivery?



Congratulations on the upcoming birth of your baby!

This is an exciting time. It is also, for many women, a time of questions. One of the most common questions asked by expectant mothers is, "When will my baby be born?" Many women also want to know if it's possible to plan the delivery date of their baby.

Discuss the information in this handout with your healthcare provider. Together, the two of you can make the best decision for a positive birth experience for you and your baby.