

# Inducing Labour

I tend to believe that babies come in their own time, and where possible, it is best to wait for that time to arrive (even when it feels like you've been pregnant a bazillion years!). Foetal lung proteins are involved in triggering labour in full term babies so there is wisdom in just waiting. However, being realistic, there are times women are facing a medical induction or need to try and get things moving.

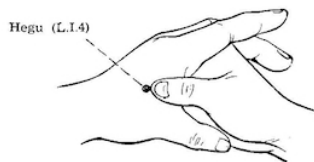
An acupuncture induction is generally a very strong treatment and differs from pre birth acupuncture in that respect. There are specific points used to encourage things along, as well as ensuring baby is in good position and pelvis is structurally sound and flexible for labour and birth. Often quite strong needle stimulation is used in a labour induction treatment to really get things moving. Depending on how ready your body and your baby are, it can take a couple of treatments. While occasionally women will go in to labor immediately during a treatment, I suggest giving it 24 to 48 hours and then having another treatment if necessary. In addition to acupuncture I tend to incorporate some acupressure and massage techniques in to an induction treatment.

For best effect I suggest combining your acupuncture treatment with some other things to encourage things along. None of these things will force labor to happen before the mother and baby are ready, they are things that will encourage the hormonal cascade so that when you are ready, labor will commence quickly and efficiently. All these activities and the acupuncture are cumulative.

Some ideas of things you can do at home to encourage labour to commence are:

## Acupressure

Acupressure can be a really powerful adjunct to acupuncture. These points can be used from 37 weeks, once per day for a few minutes per day to help prepare for labour, or they can be used later in pregnancy to help induce labour. The primary points for birth preparation and labour induction are spleen 6 (sp-6), Large intestine 4 (LI-4) and Bladder 32 (BL-32).



LI- 4 is in the flesh between thumb and forefinger



sp-6 is one hand breadth above the malleolus, find the tender spot



BL-31-34 sacral depressions

If you are using these points for labour induction, then you want to stimulate these points 3 or 4 times per day for about 15 minutes in total, rotating through each of the points for at least 5 mins. They may feel quite tender, especially after using them a few times, but they are very effective.

LI-4 can be self-stimulated quite firmly with pressure from the thumb, or you can use a pulsing technique of short bursts of firmer pressure then easing to lighter pressure.

SP-6 this is best done by a partner or support person. Measure 1 hand breadth from the middle of the lateral malleolus (ankle bone on the inside aspect of the leg) and find the tender point on the border of the tibia. It tends to be quite tender and will feel bruised when firm pressure is applied. Use firm thumb pressure

BL-31 to 34 are found on the sacrum. There are small depressions in the sacrum that can be felt on some women, but on others these can be tricky to locate. You may need to feel around the sacrum until the woman can confirm some more tender points. Firm thumb movements in a circular motion at an even pace of 1-2 circles per second.

### **Dance/Rocking/Hula hips/Squats**

All of these movements may help to stimulate the commencement of labour as well as encouraging an efficient labour. If your baby is engaged then squats, dancing, rocking on a fit ball or just moving your hips in a circular or figure 8 movement can apply awesome pressure on the cervix and can help with the release of prostaglandins, as well as encouraging further opening of pelvis. And if you are having a good time while dancing etc, then this may also help with endorphin release.

### **Nipple Stimulation**

This is actually the same technique as expressing breastmilk/colostrum. The focus is more on the areola, or the dark circle around your nipple, than the nipple itself. Alternatives to manual stimulation are using a breast pump or breastfeeding if you have already have a child will have this one covered. For this to be effective when you are trying to get labour started, you need to do this frequently. Preferably 4 to 5 times during the day, and for about 15 mins each time. When using this as a gentle birth prep then once per day for 5 to 10 mins is sufficient.

### **Getting Loved up**

Think about things that stimulate oxytocin for you and then do it, and do it more! Some suggestions to think about:

- hugs, long and luxurious ones
- being massaged or touched
- doing fun things with your child &/or partner
- cuddling the dog
- looking at kittens on the internet
- foot rubs
- cuddling a friend's baby

Whatever it is that you know will get your feel good and loved up juices flowing will help release oxytocin which we want to

## **Sex**

Sex is one of the better-known things to encourage labor to commence. It is thought to do this in 3 different ways, it will encourage good oxytocin flow if you are in the mood (so perhaps don't have it on the 'to do' list, it's best if the situation and desire allow...), it can result in uterine contraction if there is orgasm, and semen on the cervix can help cervical ripening due to prostaglandins. Research indicates that women having regular sex at term are less likely to go over 41 weeks than those abstaining.

## **Relaxations or Meditation**

Often when women are in a situation where they are trying to encourage the commencement of labour they are experiencing some pressure and stress. We are very open energetically during pregnancy, which often means more susceptible to stress and overwhelm. Not to mention the many suppressed issues or old wounds that can surface during this time of vulnerability and transition. There's a lot going on. The hormones released when you are stressed are counter to the hormones necessary to going in to labor. So finding ways to manage stress and keep yourself in a relaxed state will help encourage labor. There are specific guided relaxations to encourage labor, or you can use a favourite one that you find relaxing, whatever works best for you. If you have a meditations practice then use it! If you have done Calmbirth or Hypnobirthing, use them. Other ideas to minimise your stress response include having a good cry to release, doing breathing, journalling, or discussing issues that are surfacing with a view to airing and resolving. If you are having acupuncture it is worth mentioning this to your practitioner as acupuncture can help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, release endorphins and generally assist with your stress response.

## **Eggplant Parmigiana**

I am just going to pop this one here for the fun of it, I have no idea whether eating this will help induce labour as it is purported to do, but if you feel like cooking and like eggplant, it's worth a shot.

<https://www.nowtolove.com.au/parenting/expert-advice/eggplant-recipe-induce-labour-baby-57728?fbclid=IwAR06WQYmSWENfTd5yBxz6kzkyDLpmUd2xS9NfYbiZzPFpQ2gAiMxEOmqSXI>