

SWEEPING OF MEMBRANES AND CERVICAL MASSAGE

What is it?

Sweeping of membranes is a way of trying to gently start labour and avoid inducing labour at the hospital.

When you go for clinic visits after 38 weeks, your doctor will check your cervix during a vaginal exam to see how likely you are to go into labour. Your doctor or midwife will place a finger into the cervix and use the finger to separate the amniotic sac from your cervix. Hormones are released when the amniotic sac is separated from the cervix – they help prepare your body for labour. If your cervix is still closed, your doctor can massage it for 15–30 seconds to help release the hormones.

Membrane sweeping is done to try and start labour. If you have high blood pressure, diabetes, or other conditions, delivery may be important for your health and the health of your baby. It may also be done to prevent you from going past 42 weeks of pregnancy.

Sweeping of membranes encourages your body to go into labour using its own hormones, but it does not guarantee that you will go into labour right away. In fact, you might not go into labour at all. That said, some studies have shown that it can help some women avoid a formal induction.

Membrane sweeping is safe for you and your baby. You may feel some discomfort and have slight spotting over the next day. Some women start to have contractions but do not progress to full labour.

If you have questions or concerns about this procedure, please discuss them with your doctor or midwife.

Why you might go to the hospital (Unit 76)

- Any bleeding or significant abdominal pain
- Decreased fetal movement (less than 6 movements in a 2-hour period in one day). To monitor fetal movement, try drinking cold water and placing your hands on your abdomen.
- If you think your water has broken
- If you are having contractions
 - 37 weeks: contractions every 2–3 minutes, lasting 1 minute for 1 hour, if this is your first baby
 - 37 weeks: contractions every 5–7 minutes, lasting 1 minute, if you have already had a baby

Family Maternity Place

- Unit 76, 7th floor, South Health Campus
- Park in the “Forest” section of the parkade for easier access to the unit, and then take the inpatient elevator to the 7th floor

Health Link at 811

- Registered nurses are available to answer all of your questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

After you have your baby

Please call the clinic to cancel any further prenatal visits that may have been booked.