

References

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Women's Health

Post Dates Pregnancy

What if I am overdue?

A guide for women and whaanau

 COUNTIES MANUKAU HEALTH	Department: Women's Health	Updated: March 2016
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Women's Health Division

When is my pregnancy considered to be overdue (post dates)?

In most pregnancies labour starts naturally between 37– 42 weeks. If your pregnancy continues beyond 40 weeks it is considered overdue, and prolonged from 42 weeks on.

How can I be sure that I am over my due date?

The best way to know the length of your pregnancy is by:

- Know for sure when your last period was
- Ultrasound scan between 8 to 12 weeks (first trimester)

If neither of them is known it can be difficult to tell how far along you are.

What causes a pregnancy to go overdue?

This is unknown. Only in a very few pregnancies that go overdue some factors have been identified which may explain the reasons for prolonged pregnancy.

What are the concerns with an overdue pregnancy?

If your pregnancy lasts longer your baby's wellbeing is at greater risk because your placenta (afterbirth/whenua) may not work as well.

Research suggests that a prolonged pregnancy (over 42 weeks) may be associated with higher risk of perinatal deaths (Stillbirth).

What happens at 41 weeks?

If your pregnancy has been healthy and you've passed your due date and if **labour has not started** when you are **41 weeks** your midwife or LMC will discuss induction of labour (start labour) options with you.

One of the options your midwife can offer you, if appropriate, is a 'stretch & sweep' (can be offered from 38 weeks on). This is an internal examination during which the cervix (neck of the womb) is gently stretched and the membranes are swept and separated from the cervix.

This stimulates the cervix to release labour inducing hormones and increase the chances of your labour starting within the next 48 hours.

If you go over your due date your midwife or LMC will monitor you more regularly and this can include having an ultrasound (scan) to check how baby is growing and if there is enough water surrounding your baby and will monitor (CTG) baby's heart beat.

Your midwife may book an induction for you at the hospital when you are around 41 weeks and 3-5 days (depending on space available and individual needs).

Check baby's movements

Baby movements are a very important way of knowing that your baby is well.

Please ask your midwife for CMH Women's Health pamphlet '*My baby's movements*'.

Because movements help you to know more about how well baby is, it is important that you think about;

- is your baby moving like it usually does?
- has your baby a pattern or routine of moving?
- the type of movements you feel from your baby?

Less movement (reduced) **no movements** (absent) or a **change** in your baby's normal movements might mean that **your baby is unwell.**

You need to contact your midwife or come into hospital to have your baby checked.

If you would like to know more about induction of labour ask your midwife or doctor for CM Health Women's Health '*Induction of Labour*' pamphlet, which gives more information on induction of labour and the methods used.

**Please ask your LMC or doctor for further information
or if you have any questions.**