

NHS Forth Valley

Pre-Labour Rupture of Membranes

**also known as the
“waters breaking”**

Patient Information Leaflet

A large, decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, wavy blue shapes that resemble water or membranes. The colors range from light blue to a slightly darker blue, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Pre-labour rupture of membranes is the rupture of the membranes before the onset of labour after 37 completed weeks.

What are the membranes?

During pregnancy, your baby grows in the uterus (womb) surrounded by a bag of fluid which is called amniotic fluid. This bag consists of two membranes and these membranes help protect your baby from infection. Usually labour starts with contractions, but sometimes the waters break before labour begins.

Most women (60%) will go into labour within 24 hours of their waters breaking (NICE 2016). Sometimes this may not happen and you may need your labour started for you.

How will I know if my waters have broken?

You may notice a 'gush' of fluid or you may feel damp. The amount of fluid you lose may be anything from a trickle to a gush. The amniotic fluid is usually clear or a pinkish colour. Occasionally, it may be a greenish colour – if you notice this please contact Maternity Triage as soon as possible.

What should I do?

If you think that your waters have broken you should wear a sanitary pad (not a tampon). Check the colour and smell of the fluid, as well as how much is leaking. Sometimes the leaking fluid is urine. Leaking urine can be normal during pregnancy.

Contact Maternity Triage if you think your waters have broken. The midwife will ask you some questions and will discuss whether you need to be seen in Triage.

In Maternity Triage the Midwife will check you and your baby's wellbeing.

The Midwife or Doctor will discuss options with you. These are:

- To go home and wait for labour to start naturally.

If labour does not start:

- You will be given an appointment to attend the inpatient ward to have your labour started.
- To have your labour started as soon as we can arrange this; in certain circumstances the Doctor may advise this option.

While you are at home

Rest and eat and drink as you require. It is fine to take a bath or a shower; change sanitary pads regularly. Sexual intercourse may increase the risk of infection.

If you experience or notice any of the following please phone Maternity Triage immediately:

- If the colour of the water changes or you notice a change in the smell of your pad
- If you feel hot and feverish or cold and shivery
- If you notice any changes in your baby's movements
- If you have any concerns

Reference: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Nov 2016. Intrapartum Care for Healthy Women and Babies.

Patient Appointments/Cancellations

If you have an enquiry about an appointment or need to cancel it, please call 01324 566248.

If you can't go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

We are happy to consider requests for this publication in other languages or formats such as large print. Please call 01324 590886 (24hrs), fax 01324 590867 or email disability.department@nhs.net

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