

Making Love to Start Labor

Old Wives' Tale or One of the Best Methods to Induce Labor?

Feb 14, 2007 Brenda Lane

Oxytocin is secreted during love-making which, in turn, can also stimulate the uterus to contract. Love-making can be effective to induce labor if your body is ready.

If you have gone past your due date, you are likely researching every possible means to induce your own labor. Maybe a friend shares that her labor started right after she and her husband had intercourse so you are wondering if that will work for you? Here's the scoop.

The Physiology of Love-Making

Oxytocin is secreted at three events in a woman's life; during childbirth, breastfeeding and love-making. One of the effects oxytocin has is to contract the uterus and stimulate contractions. It stands to reason then, that love-making can induce labor in some cases.

Oral or manual stimulation of the mother's breasts is another way to secrete oxytocin and thereby stimulate contractions. This is called nipple stimulation and can be performed during or apart from love-making.

Semen also contains prostaglandins, a hormone which is also responsible for contracting the uterus.

Prostaglandins may also be involved in ripening (softening and/or thinning) the mother's cervix to make it ready for labor. In cases where love-making does not induce the mother's labor, love-making can still, in effect, make the mother's body more responsive and ready for labor once it does start.

When Love-Making is Most Effective to Induce Labor

Your body will be most responsive to natural induction methods such as love-making when the following conditions are present:

1. You are past your estimated due date.
2. Your cervix is ripe (effaced, soft and dilated)

Remember that love-making encourages production of hormones, but it's not always enough to keep contractions going and progressing into labor.

When Not to Have Intercourse as Way to Induce Labor

You should avoid having sex to start labor for any of the following reasons:

1. Your water has broken.
2. You are having pre-term labor contractions and/or you are on bed rest.
3. You are earlier than 38 weeks of pregnancy.
4. Any other medical condition identified by your care provider.

As with many of the natural ways to induce labor, it is always a good idea to check with your provider to make sure that it is a safe and healthy method for you.

The good news is that love-making may be one of the easiest ways to naturally induce labor as well as one of the more effective ones. According to the famous midwife, Ina May Gaskin, "What gets the baby in, is what gets the baby out!"