

Your Water has Broken, Now What's Next?

34 weeks 0 days and 36 weeks 6 days of pregnancy

This guide is to help you decide how to best care for yourself and your baby. If your water has broken before 37 weeks of pregnancy, there are options for the next steps. Unexpected things like this can feel like a lot. Your health care team is here to support you.

- **Your medical team told you that you water has broken and you are still preterm.**
 - Your team is going to talk to you about making a decision between two options:
 - Waiting for labor or 37 weeks of pregnancy.
 - OR
 - Starting the delivery process in the next day or so without waiting for labor.
 - Your health care providers are experts in medical knowledge., You know your body and what's most important to you. The goal is to partner for shared decisions for next steps.
 - **If at any point you develop an infection, we recommend delivery.**
 - Your team will also talk to you about the option to receive 2 steroid shots.
 - You will be tested for vaginal bacteria called Group B Strep and for other vaginal infections. If these tests results are positive, we will recommend delivery.
- **What are the benefits and risks to waiting in the hospital for labor or 37 weeks?**
 - Benefits:
 - Your baby is less likely to have complications with breathing or jaundice. They are more likely to have shorter admissions to the hospital and intensive care nursery. It is possible that your baby wouldn't need intensive care at all.
 - The risk of cesarean delivery is slightly lower if you wait.
 - Risks:
 - There is a higher chance of developing an infection inside the uterus while pregnant and a higher chance of bleeding.
- **What are the benefits and risks to moving towards being delivered now?**
 - Benefits:
 - You have a lower risk of infection and bleeding before and after your delivery.
 - Risks:
 - Your baby has a higher chance of having breathing issues or jaundice.
 - Your baby will likely stay in the hospital or intensive care nursery longer.
 - Preterm birth can also mean the baby is not able to breastfeed as well at first.
 - If you chose to move forward with being delivered now, this can be done by induction or cesarean delivery. Your team will explain which they think is better in your situation.
- **What about receiving steroid shots?**
 - Your team will let you know if you qualify for steroid shots.
 - If you receive steroid shots, you would get one shot and then another the next day.
 - Benefits:
 - Baby could have fewer complications with breathing.
 - Risks:
 - Baby could have lower blood sugars and need extra nourishment through an IV in the neonatal intensive care nursery.
- **Who should I contact if I have questions?** Your medical team is happy to answer your questions.